SPECIAL MUTANTS ISSUE

COMIC BOOKS

COMICS FEATURE™

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Exclusive Annual Report:
MARVEL'S MUTANT UNIVERSE
What lies ahead for your favorite heroes?

INVESTORS BEWARE!:
REPRINTS

VERY FIRST VILLAIN HISTORY
DR. DOOM

THE BEST HORROR COMICS OF ALL
TALES FROM THE CRYPT

ROY THOMAS REMEMBERS THE ORIGINAL
CAPTAIN MARVEL

SUPERHEROES OF THE SERIALS
ATOM MAN VS SUPERMAN

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HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS—

Sensibilities in conflict. That's really the best way that you can sum up the crisis that now besets the comic book industry. As a direct result of the confrontation, DC Comics, which previously was on one big roll is now in the process of losing their top creative talent. A storedealer in the midwest has already been arrested; unfortunately, other arrests will surely follow. The entire creative community of writers and artists is up in arms. The spectre of parents and religious leaders joining a crusade against comic books can be dimly observed in the distance. And all of the turmoil is simply because one abused member of the team that produces comic books has failed.

As all of us who were once children know, there is nothing more untamed and dangerous than a young person. They are savage little beasties dearly in need of civilizing. We were too. It is the job of parents to impart those more refined values into the little barbarians. To do this, within sensible limits, they must control what their kids are exposed to. If they don't they have failed in the most important job that a human being can have, raising the next generation.

Artists and writers feel a strong need to exercise creative freedom and control of their offspring, the artwork and writing that they produce. The thought of censorship scares them to the bone and with very good reason.

The real answer to the split between the need of parents and the needs of the artist—with words or pictures—is to make sure that comic books are carefully designed products. If you were going to set out to manufacture a pair of shoes or an automobile, you wouldn't just put together whatever struck your fancy. First—and I learned this in marketing 101—you have to survey your potential market, finding out exactly what they want. Do they want a car with a roof? How about shoes with laces versus shoes without laces? And all of the other myriad alternatives in the manufacture of the items. No matter what your product is, you have to know what the people you hope to sell it to need. The same is true of publications. You wouldn't put the same article into an issue of **Business Week** that you would in **Jack and Jill** or the same one in **Hustler** that you would run in **Readers Digest**. Comic books are merely a type of communication, a method for combining visual and text information in a way that can be passed on to a reader. Just as magazines or books or newspapers or any other format of publication can differ greatly from another publication in the same format, so can one comic book be completely different in content, approach and intended audience from another. If we are going to attempt to create comic books for an older audience, we must also remember that there is a large young audience that buys comic books. A dozen years ago comic books were clearly divided, the undergrounds which were sold through unconventional outlets were aimed at adults, the rest of the crop were aimed at the kids. Now they sit side-by-side on the same shelves and are issued by the same publishers.

There is nothing wrong with a comic book that is aimed at an adult audience and is loaded with things that any sane person would not want their seven year old daughter to peruse. But it does serve a different function than a comic book about Little Archie!

A publishing company, which is a firm that manufactures a product called comic books in this case, hires an editor to oversee their books. The job of the editor is not just to act as a traffic manager or to sit around and suggest ideas to writers and artists. It is not even just to proofread the final product. The job of an editor is all of this plus one more very important function. The editor is the one person on the creative team who has a real overview of the product being created and who understands the reason the product is being made. He or she must also understand for whom the product is intended. It is the job of the editor to understand the intended target and to intuitively, at a gut level, understand the desires and needs of that intended consumer. It is then absolutely essential that the editor carefully monitor every step of the production process to see that the product which is needed is the one that is produced and that the marketing people properly direct the product to its audience. In a word, it is the job of the editor to provide that very essential ingredient: quality control. When that doesn't happen, trouble begins.

The current situation results from a lot of companies not clearly planning their books and simply dropping all of them onto an unsuspecting chain of distributors, retailers and finally buying public.

Some years ago, one very prominent writer—and good friend—left Marvel Comics to go over to DC Comics because Marvel required that he work with an editor. Or so the press reported, he has since suggested that there was much more to it than just this, including some question about the training and abilities of the editors in question. DC did not feel a need for an editor separate from the writer. At the time, I told a number of people that this could lead to trouble. A writer simply doesn't have the time to do an editor's job properly—at least not the job that I deem to be the appropriate role of the editor. Now, so to speak, the storm is upon us. We are facing the unfortunate conclusion of the trend of denigrating the job of the editor. DC has responded to the need. They have not responded intelligently. Instead of consulting their writers, properly surveying their audience and working with their editors so that each book could be handled on an individual basis, as an individual product, they have issued a decree from above. The decree effectively applies to all books. The decree bypasses the chain of responsibility of the editor—who DC Comics apparently still does not see as important to the product. The result is that the cure is worse than the problem and the exodus has begun. Creative people are announcing their flight in droves...and it is the best who are leaving.

The real answer does not lie with the imposition of arbitrary standards from above but in the creative chain itself, writer, artist and editor working together to create a fine product for the poor buyer who lays down his coin.

HAPPY HAL

COMICS FEATURE

NUMBER 55 MAY 1987

DEPARTMENTS

HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS
2

FEATURE NEWS
4

CONSUMER GUIDE
6

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FEATURES

EXCLUSIVE ANNUAL REPORT:

Marvel's Mutant Universe

New heroes! New writers and artists! New powers! New books! They all combine to create the most exciting days of the Marvel Mutants. There's a new writer on **The New Mutants**—at least temporarily; a new artist on **The X-Men**! The Angel dies, and then faces an even stranger fate! Several new books will soon appear! There's lots happening for everyone's favorite mutant superheroes, and villains. Quicksilver turns villain, Magneto faces the World Court! And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

26

COLUMNS

INDEPENDENT LINE—
The people behind Aircel Comics! Plus the latest news and a list of your upcoming favorites.
7

VILLAINS—
What every hero needs...good villains to fight! And we start with the most important one in the Marvel Universe...Dr. Doom! By James Van Hise.
12

FUN & PROFIT—
More inside tips from Mike Benton. Watch out for reprints!
20

SILVER AGE—
Once upon a time DC Comics saw the distant future as bright and sparkling, loaded with space museums, interstellar cabdrivers and lots more! Gerard Jones fondly remembers those days of Weisinger, Schwartz and all the other sci fi marvels!
36

COMICS ON FILM—
Eric Hoffman is back again with another dose of screen magic. This time he brings **Atom Man vs. Superman** to life and visits with Kirk Alyn!
40

BEFORE THE SILVER AGE—
EC Comics set the standards for horror comics. Their comics were masterfully written, beautifully drawn and...scary!
46

GOLDEN AGE—
Hot on the heels of launching his mini-series featuring the adventures of a new Captain Marvel, Roy Thomas returns to the '40s to pay tribute to the original Big Red Cheese!
50

FEATURE NEWS

THE ABSOLUTION OF PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

CREATORS BOYCOTT DC COMICS RATED BOOKS

The following letter, as reported in the February 13, 1987 **Comics Buyers Guide**, was mailed to DC Comics Publisher Jenette Kahn on January 19, 1987:

We have received your correspondence of December 4, which announced and described DC's new rating system.

Since no member of your staff saw fit at any point in the development of these new guidelines to consult a single member of the freelance community, we cannot accept your assertion that the rating system was designed to protect our creative autonomy. It is apparent, from the timing of DC's decision, and the wording of the document itself, that DC is surrendering to demands for censorship made by distributors and retailers.

Nor can we accept claims made by DC personnel that the rating system will leave working conditions for freelance talent at DC unchanged. No policy could be drafted that would accomodate Steve Geppi, Buddy Saunders, and us.

Further, we are not eager to bring our ideas and our efforts to a publisher whose stated intention is to place our work in "controlled distribution."

To the extent that it is possible under DC's rating system, we will honor our existing contractual obligations to DC. However, we will not consider producing any new work for DC for as long as DC maintains its position in this matter.

We hope you understand that, due to the urgent nature of the issue of censorship in the comics industry, we feel it necessary to make our decision known to the comics profession and readership, and will protest DC's ratings system in every public forum available to us.

(signed) Frank Miller
Marv Wolfman
Howard Chaykin
Alan Moore

For more on this issue please refer to the editorial on the inside front cover of this issue.

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW SPOTLIGHT

THE FLASH, SPEEDING ALONG

"I find myself writing mostly Earth-shattering events stories," states the writer of the new Flash, Mike Baron. "The second issue is a fight to the death with Vandal Savage. It also shows Flash trying to settle down in his new lifestyle and accomodate himself to his new found wealth. One of the things I want to get into in future issues is the way the money brings him a lot of problems. He buys an estate on Long Island near a township. But when they find out that the Flash is living near them, they want to have him leave because their liability insurance is cancelled.

"The third and forth issues are devoted to a creature called the Kilg're, which is a bio-electric virus, an intelligent virus which invades Earth's electro-mechanical grid and tries to kick all the humans out. It's all drawn and I'm really excited by what Jackson Guice has done.

"The Flash Annual is all done. I'm very excited about that. It's sort of the Flash's version of *Big Trouble in Little China*.

"Flash 5 and 6 concern his romance with Tina McGee and the jealousy of her husband, Jerry, who is a brilliant research scientist researching genetics. He tries to turn himself into a monster out of his jealousy towards the Flash and his desire to prove that he's just as good a man to his wife.

"Issue 7 is how Flash goes inside the Soviet Union to rescue a scientist who is in internal exile so that he can save the life of Jerry McGee."

This Flash, Wally West, is different from the Barry Allen Flash in that he cannot run as fast as the speed of light, vibrate his molecules or travel through time.

"He can run about 720 miles an hour—just about the speed of sound," Baron reveals. "And the biggest change is that he has to consume enormous amounts of food to get the energy to do this, something that Barry Allen never had to deal with. And he also has to rest for periods after exerting himself. We're trying to keep this version a little more chained to reality."

SOME UPCOMING BOOKS

Here are a few random items of possible interest:

►Amethyst may have died in the last issue of her regular series, but she'll be back again for a four issue mini-series that ties in with the Legion of Super-heroes. It turns out that in the time of the Legion, Gem World is known as Sorceror's World.

►**Adventures of the Outsiders** has been cancelled by DC Comics.

►There will be a three issue Fathom mini-series spinning off from **The Elementals**. This will chronicle the first solo adventures of the water Elemental of the team and will be written and drawn by two relative novices to comics. Lawrence Schick will handle the writing chores while Jill Thompson supplies the pencils. The story will confront Fathom with an underwater civilization.

►**Silverblade** is a new DC series written by Cary Bates, pencilled by Gene Colan and inked by Klaus Janson. Jonathan Lord is a 75-year old recluse who used to be a Hollywood hearthrob. A force from beyond chooses Lord to become the bearer of a power that allows him to become anything he ever played on celluloid and rejuvenates him to look like a typical yuppie. When he assumes the role of one of his past performances he also takes on the knowledge and attributes that the character would have. If he portrays a pilot, he'll know how to fly a plane.

►Stan Lee has a new comic coming out. In it Earth will become a refuge for an alien scientist who has created a Circle of Power, a device that can siphon solar energy into a person. A teenager will gain the powers this offers in order to stop an alien being from draining our sun and destroying the Earth. This one-shot comic ties in with a new cartoon series and will be drawn by Jim Mooney and inked by Dennis Janke.

►Mike Baron and Barry Crain have a new 12-issue maxi-series planned. **Sonic Disruptors** will feature the exploits of an outlaw radio station in the future. The United States is then run by a military government which allows radio broadcasting and the outlaw station defies it by broadcasting rock 'n' roll 24 hours a day.

Comics Consumer Guide

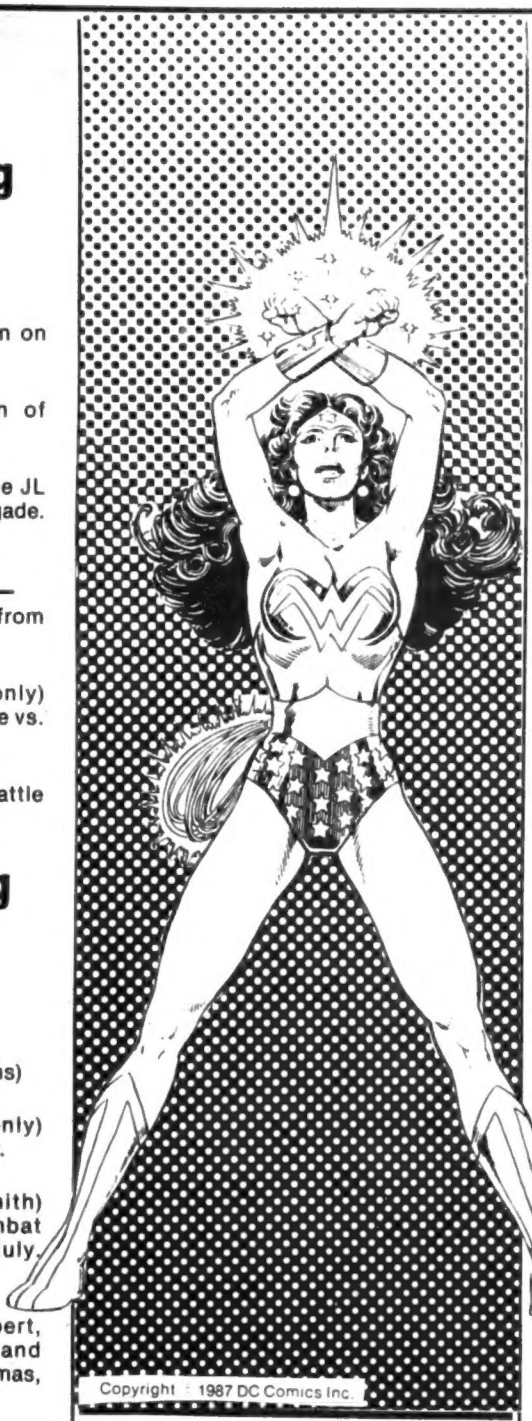
DC

►3/10/87 Shipping

☐ **CENTURIONS #1—**
(Rozakis/Heck/Vey)
☐ **FIRESTORM #61—**
(Ostrander/Brozowski/Janke) Typhoon on the rampage.
☐ **FLASH #2—**
(Baron/Guice/Mahlstedt) The wrath of Vandal Savage.
☐ **THE JUSTICE LEAGUE #3—**
(Giffen/DeMatteis/Maguire/Gordon) The JL go to Russia to combat Rocket Red Brigade.
☐ **THE OUTSIDERS #21—**
(Barr/Aparo) Kobra returns.
☐ **TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS #79—**
(Wolfman/Barreto/Tanghal) Reprinted from TT #20.
☐ **VIGILANTE #43—**
(Direct sales only) (Kupperberg/Smith/Burchett) Vigilante vs. Peacemaker.
☐ **WONDER WOMAN #6—**
(Perez/Wein/Patterson) The ultimate battle between Diana and Ares.

►3/17/87 Shipping

☐ **BATMAN #409—**
(Collins/Warner/DeCarlo)
☐ **BLUE BEETLE #14—**
(Wein/Cullins/Barras)
☐ **ELECTRIC WARRIOR #15—**
(Direct sales only) (Moench/Baikie/Adkins)
☐ **LEGION OF SUPERHEROES #36—**
(Direct sales only) (Levitz/LaRocque/DeCarlo) A new leader.
☐ **OUTSIDERS SPECIAL #1—**
(Direct sales only) (Barr/Patton/Smith) Outsiders meet Infinity Inc. to combat reborn Baron Bedlam and Force of July. Concludes in Infinity Inc. Special.
☐ **SECRET ORIGINS #16—**
Warlord by Fleisher and A. Kubert, Mazing Man by Rozakis, DeStefano and Kesel and Golden Age Hourman by Thomas, Bair and Gustovich.
☐ **STAR TREK #40—**
(Wein/Sutton/Villagran) Mudd's world.
☐ **SUPERMAN #7—**
(Byrne/Byrne/Kesel)Intro Rampage.
☐ **WATCHMEN #11—**
(Direct sales only) (Moore/Gibbons) Origin Ozymanias. Penultimate issue.
☐ **YOUNG ALL STARS #2—**
(Thomas & Thomas/Murray/Jones) Axis Amerika.



►3/24/87 Shipping

☐ **ADV OF THE OUTSIDERS #47—**
(Barr/Aparo) Reprints #9.
☐ **ADV. SUPERMAN #430—**
(Wolfman/Ordway)
☐ **BOOSTER GOLD #18—**
(Jurgens/Jurgens/Lewis)
☐ **DR. FATE #1—**
(Of 4) (Direct sales only) (DeMatteis/Giffen)
☐ **INFINITY INC. #40—**
(Direct sales only) (Thomas & Thomas/Argondezzi/DeZuniga) Thunderbolt.
☐ **GREEN LANTERN CORPS. #214—**
(Englehart/Gibson/Farmer) Part 2 of 3.
☐ **THE NEW TEEN TITANS #33—**
(Levitz/Larsen/Tanghal)
☐ **SHAZAM: THE NEW BEGINNING #4—**
(Final issue) (Thomas & Thomas/Mandrake) Final battle with Black Adam.
☐ **SWAMP THING #62—**
(Veitch/Veitch/Yeates) Guest star is Metron of the New Gods.
☐ **WARLORD #119—**
(Fleisher/Randall/Smith) Power Girl unleashes a demon.

►3/31/87 Shipping

☐ **ACTION #590—**
(Byrne/Giordano) Guest stars Rose and the Thorn.
☐ **CAPTAIN ATOM #5—**
(Bates/Broderick/Smith) Captain Atom clashes with Firestorm.
☐ **CENTURIONS #2—**
(Rozakis/Heck/Vey) Origin.
☐ **DETECTIVE COMICS #576—**
(Barr/Davis/Neary) Part 2 of Year Two.
☐ **HAWKMAN #12—**
(Mishkin/Howell/Garzon) Back to Thanagar.
☐ **MASK #6—**
(Fleisher/Swan/Schaffenberger)
☐ **INFINITY INC. SPECIAL #1—**
(Direct sales only) (Thomas & Thomas/Argondezzi/DeZuniga) Infinitors and Outsiders against the Psycho-Pirate.
☐ **THE SPECTRE #4—**
(Moench/Colan/Mitchell)
☐ **TALES OF THE LEGION #349—**
(Levitz/LaRocque/Mahlstedt) Reprints #24.

►4/7/87 Shipping

☐ **BATMAN ANNUAL #11—**
(Moore/Freeman) Clayface falls madly in love. Penguin is also smitten—story by Collins/Breyfogle.
☐ **TEEN TITANS SPOTLIGHT #12—**
(Moench/Colon) Wonder Girl.
☐ **QUESTION #6—**
(Direct sales only) (O'Neil/Cowan/Magyar)
☐ **'MAZING MAN SPECIAL #1—**
(Rozakis/DeStefano/Boldman) Return of Maze.
☐ **SUICIDE SQUAD #3—**
(Ostrander/McDonnell/Kesel)

Independent Live

MILLER JOINS SAMURAI COMIC

Since its debut in Japan in 1970 as Kozure Okami, the 28-volume epic by writer Kazuo Koike and artist Goseki Kojima has set the standard for the Samurai graphic story genre. With a Japanese circulation of over six million copies sold, **Lone Wolf and Cub** has spawned six live action theatrical films, a television series, four stage plays and five hit records.

Now it is coming to the United States, courtesy of First Comics. It will be published as a monthly, 64 page, square bound book. Frank Miller will provide new full color covers for the first twelve issues as well as an ongoing series of introductions.

Lone Wolf and Cub has been cited as a major inspiration for the visual styles of American filmmakers such as John Milius and John Carpenter, and has directly influenced the art and storytelling techniques of numerous american comic book artists—including the work of Frank Miller.

A BOY AND HIS DOG

Mad Dog Graphics will publish a two-issue comic book rendition of Harlan Ellison's award-winning story "A Boy and his Dog" to be illustrated by Richard Corben. The series will be titled, **Vic and Blood: The Chronicles of a Boy and his Dog.**

"The title was changed," says publisher Jan Strnad, "because the graphic version will incorporate two stories that have received only limited distribution, 'Eggsucker' and 'Run, Spot, Run.' " Both stories feature the main characters from "A Boy and his Dog."

NEW PROJECTS FROM AIRCEL

In addition to Pat McEown's **Underground** and **Maelstrom**, Barry Blair and artist Rob Clark are at the helm of one of Aircel's new projects

Barry Blair and Rob Clark are putting together a graphic novel set in the South China Sea, circa 1939. A young Homer Bentley gets involved in the China/Japan conflict, just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Meanwhile Pat McEown has been helping Barry Blair on his **Elflord** as well as doing **Underground**. Jim Somerville has been working on a new book, **Maelstrom** while David Cooper and Don Lanouette have been creating **Icarus** and Dale Keown has taken over **Samurai**.

GULACY TO DRAW VALKYRIE

Paul Gulacy will pencil a three issue **Valkyrie** mini-series for Eclipse Comics. The book will be written by **Airboy** scripter Chuck Dixon and inked by Willie Blyberg. "This is a labor of love for all concerned," says Editor-In-Chief Cat Yronwode. "It's no secret that Valkyrie is one of my all-time favorite characters. Well, that turns out to be the case with everyone involved in the project. We're all really excited."

In the mini-series, Valkyrie's re-emergence in the public eye will result in the Soviet Union's prosecution of her on 40-year-old war crimes charges from the period when she flew for the Luftwaffe.

Aircel

BY JAMES VAN HISE

Aircel has become one of the biggest little companies going. While others are suffering from retailer backlash against poorly written and drawn books which don't sell, Aircel is emerging as the company that the dealers respect. Their titles include **Elflord, Samurai, Dragonring** and **Stark Future.** Recently they added **Warlock 5** and **Icarus** to their already successful monthly lineup. Not bad for a business which started out as a construction company.

"We used to be called Aircel Insulation," Publisher Ken Campbell explains. "We did retrofit home insulation and were in business for 10 years doing that. Barry Blair and his brother were working for me and last February they approached me with a proposal to do comic books. They would do the artistic end but they needed someone for the management end. It was done more as a hobby, really, but then it took off like crazy and so we switched over. Now we emphasize the publishing end and pretty much discontinued the insulation end of it."

The first book they published was **Samurai** by Barry Blair and Dale Keown. Other local talent was hired as the company grew. "In some cases we've had people move from Toronto (which is 300 miles from here) to Ottawa to take up residency and work for us. We have a studio where they go all day and that's where they draw, so we have reasonably good control over how it's going together. We treat it as a job, not as an art form. Some of our competitors get too wrapped up in sitting around, drinking espresso, wearing French berets and going through the great act of being a struggling artist rather than getting up, going to work and doing the job," Campbell observes. "You don't have mental blocks, you get up in the morning, go to the studio, work for eight hours and at the end of a week you will have turned out a product. But if you want to play egotistical artist, then you will just not put out a product and you will not be successful. It's that simple."

THE ORIGINS OF ELFLORD

One of the most popular Aircel books, and the first to go from black and white into color, is **Elflord**. Created and drawn by Barry Blair, it began as a fanzine back in 1976.

"I did a local Elflord black and white fanzine for ten years," Blair states. "I remember doing the first issue and then seeing the first small issue of **Elfquest**. The design for some of the characters in **Elflord** appeared in the letters page of an early **Elfquest**. Wendy and I were corresponding to let each other know the different characters we were inventing so that I could keep **Elflord** as different from **Elfquest** as possible. When we got together and formed Aircel a year ago, **Elflord** was one of the first things I wanted to do. I was in the midst of doing **Samurai** at the time so we made **Elflord** our second title and it's been phenomenally successful. We have letters from Sweden, Denmark and Australia."

Blair describes the series as a medieval fantasy with tones of Robin Hood. "I hesitate to say **Lord of the Rings** because it's nothing like that, and we try to get as far away from **Elfquest** as we can. As a base for humor I try to use things like **The Anubis Gates** by Tim Powers or **The Elfin Shop** by James Blaylock. I really like their brand of humor and we're switching to more of

that in upcoming issues. It's hard to do real subtle things in comic books, but we're trying to get a bit more adult in there."

Another new forthcoming fantasy title, **Darkwood**, will feature a character who will be appearing simultaneously in both that book and in **Elflord**. "The wizard appears in both books," Blair explains, even though **Darkwood** is located on another world entirely. "There's a lot more dwarves and goblins and things inhabiting this huge forest world, and there's a lot of wizards. This wizard can go back and forth between both worlds."

GIVE THEM WHAT *THEY* WANT

While books like **Elfquest** and **Cerebus** have become successful based on a creative philosophy of the artist satisfying himself first, whether or not there is any overt indication of an audience for the idea, Aircel takes what they feel is a more realistic and pragmatic course. In fact, publisher Campbell thinks that the self-publishing success of **Elfquest** is, "good luck rather than good management. That's not a reflection on **Elfquest** by any means. But for every book that's a success using that approach, there's literally hundreds that are failures. Treating it as a business and publishing what is going to be popular and what is going to sell has a far higher success ratio."

Campbell feels that his success is based on the fact that Aircel is not aiming at the same audience that Marvel and DC are.

"They're putting out hundreds of thousands of books as opposed to our tens of thousands, and they have a different business philosophy. What they want to do is satisfy the mass market whereas we are satisfying the direct market. They're doing what's best for them and we feel that we're doing what's best for us. I think that they're also aiming at a younger market than we are — a less discerning market. I think that ours is a 12-14 year old market whereas DC and Marvel are aiming at the 8-12 year olds."

And as Aircel enters its second year of publishing, the support seems to be growing for their seven monthly titles. Obviously they're doing something that's very right!

- ☐ GROO #29—
- ☐ ELFQUEST #24—
- ☐ DRAGONRING #4—
- ☐ ELFLORD #7—
- ☐ EX-MUTANTS GRAPHIC NOVEL—
- ☐ BULLWINKLE AND ROCK 3-D #1—
- ☐ GUMBY 3—D—
- ☐ JONNY QUEST #10—
- ☐ ROBOTECH #18—
- ☐ GINGER FOX HARDCOVER—
- ☐ JUSTICE MACHINE #4—
- ☐ ROBOTECH MASTERS #15—
- ☐ GRENDEL #7—
- ☐ MANIFEST DESTINY #1—
- ☐ RAD PATROL #1—
- ☐ TESS #1—
- ☐ SCOUT #17—
- ☐ LEGION INDEX #4—
- ☐ TALES OF TERROR #11—
- ☐ AIRBOY #17—
- ☐ DESTROY! 3—D SPECIAL—
- ☐ THE NEW WAVE 3-D—
- ☐ HI SCHOCK SHLOCK #1—
- ☐ JLA INDEX #8—
- ☐ AIRBOY #18—
- ☐ VILLAINS & VIGILANTES #4—
- ☐ AXA #1—
- ☐ MIRACLEMAN #12—
- ☐ ESPERS #5—
- ☐ SEADRAGON #10—
- ☐ ANYTHING GOES #5—
- ☐ DINOSAUR REX #3—
- ☐ MIRACLE SQUAD #4—
- ☐ BADGER #25—
- ☐ EVANGELINE #2—
- ☐ NEXUS #34—

- ☐ GRIMJACK #36—
- ☐ DREADSTAR #31—
- ☐ GHOSTBUSTERS #5—
- ☐ DYNAMO JOE #9—
- ☐ AMERICAN FLAGG! #42—
- ☐ HAWKMOON #4—
- ☐ THE CHRONICLES OF CORUM #4—
- ☐ SABLE #49—
- ☐ BEOWULF GRAPHIC NOVEL—
- ☐ THE LAST VIKING HEROES #1—
- ☐ CHROME #4—
- ☐ THE SATURDAY KNIGHTS #4—
- ☐ VALOR THUNDERSTAR #3—
- ☐ PROTOSTAR #1—
- ☐ 3-D ZONE #2—
- ☐ PARADAX #1—
- ☐ HERO ALLIANCE #3—
- ☐ TERRAFORMERS #4—
- ☐ THE SAGA OF SKETCH #1—

- ☐ PUMA BLUES #5—
- ☐ CEREBUS #96—
- ☐ THE BIG EDSEL BAND #1—
- ☐ ICARUS #1—
- ☐ SAMURAI #16—
- ☐ STARK: FUTURE #10—
- ☐ WARLOCK #5—
- ☐ AMAZING COMICS PREMIERE #5—
- ☐ BEAST WARRIORS OF SHAOLIN #2—
- ☐ BLIP & THE CCADS #2—
- ☐ PHIGMENTS #3—
- ☐ MR. DOOM #1—
- ☐ NINJA-BOTS SUPER SPECIAL #1—
- ☐ VIDEOVISIONS #1—

- ☐ POWER PLAYS #3—
- ☐ SPRING BREAK #1—
- ☐ SILLY COMICS #2—
- ☐ MANGAZINE #6—
- ☐ BANETOWN #1—
- ☐ THE REALM #7—
- ☐ CROW #4—
- ☐ DICK TRACY #11—
- ☐ FIGMENTS #2—
- ☐ HAMSTER VICE #7—
- ☐ JAX #3—
- ☐ LABOR FORCE #5—
- ☐ LAFFIN GAS #7—
- ☐ MAD DOG #3—
- ☐ MIDNITE #3—
- ☐ NERVOUS REX #10—
- ☐ MYTHS AND MEN #2—
- ☐ PAJAMA CHRONICLES #3—
- ☐ RIVIT #2—
- ☐ TUNESIA #1—
- ☐ MICRA #4—
- ☐ THE OTHERS #1—
- ☐ BORIS THE BEAR #8—
- ☐ CONCRETE #1—
- ☐ BULLET CROW #1—
- ☐ CROSSFIRE #20—
- ☐ FUSION #2—
- ☐ PJ WARLOCK #3—
- ☐ RADIO BOY #1—
- ☐ SPACED #12—
- ☐ STIG'S INFERNO #7—
- ☐ ZOT #12—
- ☐ KYRA #5—
- ☐ DEATHBRINGER #3—
- ☐ EPSILON WAVE #5—
- ☐ FREE FIRE ZONE #2—
- ☐ FOREVER NOW #2—
- ☐ MAN FROM UNCLE #4—
- ☐ SHADOW BLADE #2—
- ☐ CRITTERS #14—
- ☐ DOG BOY #4—
- ☐ MYRON MOOSE FUNNIES #2—
- ☐ NEAT STUFF #7—
- ☐ PRIME CUTS #—
- ☐ WANDERING STAR #1—
- ☐ WARDRUMS #2—
- ☐ OMAHA #5—
- ☐ WEIRDO #19—
- ☐ RALPH SNART #6—
- ☐ ULTRA KLUTZ @—
- ☐ AMUSING STORIES #1—
- ☐ FRENCH ICE #1—
- ☐ HOLIDAY OUT #3—
- ☐ MAXWELL MOUSE FOLLIES #6—
- ☐ MS. TREE #38—
- ☐ SHADOWS FROM THE GRAVE #1—
- ☐ CARTOON HISTORY THE UNIV #1—
- ☐ BIG DADDY ROTH'S RAT FINK #1—
- ☐ CAPTAIN CONFEDERACY #5—
- ☐ RETEIF #1—
- ☐ SPLAT! #1—
- ☐ RIP IN TIME #4—

MARVEL

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►3/3/87

☐ **THE AVENGERS GRAPHIC NOVEL—**
(Michelinie/Hall) Doctor Doom and Ultron.
☐ **DAREDEVIL #244—**
(Nocenti/Williams/Williamson) Daredevil battles Crack in second of two parts.
☐ **NEW MUTANTS #53—**
(Claremont/Leonardi) The Hellfire Club.
☐ **NIGHT MASK #9—**
(Plunkett/Bagley/DeZuniga)
☐ **PSI FORCE #9—**
(Nicieza/Hall/Gil)
☐ **STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI #8—**
(Gillis/Anderson/Williams) Second generation force joins the first.
☐ **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #28—**
(Layton/Geiger/Colletta) Spidey's identity imperiled.
☐ **WEST COAST AVENGERS #22—**
(Englehart/Milgrom/Sinnott) Part 6 of 7. Moon Knight and The Amazing Dr. Pym, superpowered adventurer.
☐ **COMET MAN #6—**
(Direct sales only) (Mumy & Ferrer/Jones/Talaoc) (6 of 6)
☐ **CONAN THE KING #41—**
(Kraar/Docherty/Bator) On the high seas.
☐ **AVENGERS VS THE X-MEN #4—**
(Of 4) (Stern/Silvestri/Rubinstein) Magneto faces the World Court.

►3/10/87 Shipping

☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #48—**
(Mantlo/Shoemaker)
☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #290—**
(Michelinie/Romita Jr.) Peter proposes.
☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #331—**
(Gruenwald/Neary/Colletta)
☐ **FALLEN ANGELS #4—**
(Of 8) (Duffy/Gammill/Palmer) Sunspot and Warlock recruit Devil Dinosaur and Moonboy, who are revealed as mutants.
☐ **KICKERS INC. #9—**
(Zimmerman/Kupperberg/DeZuniga)
☐ **MERC #9—**
(Murray/Morrow) Intro of new mercenary.
☐ **STRANGE TALES #4—**
Mantlo/Blevins Cloak and Dagger crosses over with Gillis/Warner/Emberlin Dr. Strange.
☐ **HEADMASTERS #1—**
(Of 4) (Budiansky/Springer) Transformers limited series.
☐ **MEPHISTO VS FOUR HEROES #4—**
(Of 4) (Milgrom/J. Buscema/Wiacek) Mephisto battles Avengers, ties in with Thor #381.
☐ **SPIDER-MAN DIGEST #4—**
Reprints Amazing Spider-Man #s 62-64.
☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #137—**
(Black and white magazine) (Dixon/Kwapisz/Chan)

►3/17/87 Shipping

☐ **MARVEL AGE #52—**
☐ **AVENGERS #281—**
(Stern/J. Buscema/Palmer) Olympian gods.
☐ **D.P. 7 #9—**
(Gruenwald/Ryan/Tanghal) Intro new team of paranormals.
☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #333—**
(David McFarlane)
☐ **JUSTICE #9—**
(Thomas/Giffen/Bryant)
☐ **MARVEL TALES #201—**
(Claremont/Byrne) Reprints Marvel Team-Up #65.
☐ **THE PUNISHER #1—**
(Baron/Janson)
☐ **X-MEN #219—**
(Claremont/Blevins/Green) Reintro Havok.
☐ **CONAN #196—**
(Owsley/Semeiks/Isherwood) Villain is the Beast.
☐ **G.I. JOE #61—**
(Hama/McFarlane/Mushynsky)
☐ **MARVEL SAGA #20—**
☐ **MARVEL TEAM-UP INDEX #6—**
☐ **SILVER SURFER #1—**
(Englehart/Rogers) New ongoing, not limited, series.
☐ **MARVEL FANFARE #33—**
(Direct sales only) (Claremont/Brigman/Austin) X-Men.
☐ **WOLVERINE TRADE PAPERBACK—**
(Claremont/Miller) Reprint.

►3/24/87 Shipping

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #304—**
(Englehart/J. Buscema/S. Buscema) Quicksilver kidnaps Alicia.
☐ **IRON MAN #220—**
(Michelinie/Bright/Layton) Guest stars Spymaster against The Ghost.
☐ **THE 'NAM #8—**
(Murray/Golden/Beatty) Reprint of "Fifth to the First" with 9 new pages by Golden.
☐ **PETER PARKER #128—**
(David/Kupperberg) Guest stars Black Cat, Silver Sable, Daredevil all against The Foreigner. Part two of three, wraps up triangle.
☐ **SPITFIRE #10—**
(Bates/Kupperberg/DeZuniga) Name change Codename: Spitfire. Dr. Swenson is recruited by CIA-type group.
☐ **STAR BRAND #8—**
(Bates/Jones/Bulanadi)
☐ **THOR #381—**
(W. Simonson/S. Buscema)
☐ **X-FACTOR #18—**
(L. Simonson/W. Simonson) Cyclops vs Marvel Girl.
☐ **CLASSIC X-MEN #11—**
(Claremont Bolton) Reprints X-Men #103.
☐ **TRANSFORMERS #30—**
(Budiansky/Perlin/Akin & Garvey)
☐ **TRANSFORMERS DIGEST #4—**
Reprints issues 7 and 8.
☐ **CLASSIC CONAN #2—**
Reprint.
☐ **X-MEN INDEX #2—**
☐ **CONAN THE REIVER GRAPHIC NOVEL**
(Kraar/J. & M. Severin) Young Conan, thief.
☐ **MARVEL UNIV TRADE PB #4—**

VILLAINS

BY JAMES VAN HI

DOCTOR DOOM

Every comic book company has one villain who rises to pre-eminence above the rest. At DC, Lex Luthor emerged as their most popular malefector. At Marvel, it's Doctor Doom. But while Doom began as a typical teeth-gnashing villain in the grand old tradition, Lee and Kirby made much more of him than that. As time went by they gave him a human dimension which made him a much more interesting character. That tradition, established in the mid-Sixties, continues to this day.

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FIRST FORAY

Fantastic Four #5 (July 1962) introduces the monarch of Latveria less than a year into the existence of Marvel's flagship title. The Fantastic Four were still very new then and the nature of the group was still being explored. What better way to show what people are made of than to put them under pressure? Dr. Doom did that as well as providing the focus for one of the best stories in the 25-year history of the series. That twenty-three page story not only tells us who Dr. Doom is (in a very abbreviated 6 panel origin), but demonstrates that he is at least Reed Richards intellectual equal, or perhaps even his superior since Doom invented a time machine. The splash page shows Doom with books on demons, science and sorcery, thus hinting at arcane interests whose true nature would not be revealed for some months. "Prisoners of Doctor Doom!" presents a Doom that foreshadows Darth Vader, and just as Vader was to be shown to believe fully in the wisdom of his chosen path, so too does Doom.

Although he is defeated in their initial engagement, Doom doesn't wait long for a rematch. In fact he returns in issue 6 for his second, and equally fantastic, confrontation.

ENTER, THE SUB-MARINER

When the Sub-Mariner was reintroduced to comics in the fourth issue of **The Fantastic Four**, it was as an amnesiac who recovered his identity only to find that Atlantis had been destroyed by an atomic test and his people had vanished. Embittered, the undersea monarch declared all surface dwellers his enemies. Dr. Doom revealed the depth of his cunning and the range of his genius when he sought out Namor and forged an alliance by playing on Namor's grief for his lost people. But while Namor resents the Fantastic Four for their defeat of his initial raid on New York, he is attracted to Susan Storm and refuses to do anything to jeopardize her. Doom agrees to meet those terms and gives Namor a magnetic device to plant in the basement of the Baxter Building headquarters of the FF. But Doom considers Namor just as big a threat to his global plans as the FF, so Doom launches his attack by stealing the entire Baxter Building while Namor is still inside, and drags it off into space behind his rocket plane. When the FF fail to reach Doom, Namor steps in to attack the man who betrayed him. He succeeds in using his powers to drive Doom out of his rocket plane so that he appears to become lost in space. In the early days of Doom's attacks against the Fantastic Four, the battles often ended with Doom meeting what seemed to be an inescapable doom all his own.

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Dr. Doom plays with the FF in an early issue...

VILLAINS

THE OVOIDS

The tenth issue of **The Fantastic Four** reveals that Doom is found by a spaceship of beings known as The Ovoids. They teach him their secrets, including that of mind transference between bodies. Doom learns a few more of their tricks on his own as his stated goal is still the total domination of the human race. When the aliens return him to Earth, Doom goes to the offices of Marvel Comics! He forces Stan Lee to call Reed Richards and summon him to the office on business. There Doom surprises Reed, gasses him and uses a teleportation device to take him back to his castle. Doom leaves Lee & Kirby with a messge to give to the rest of the FF. After switching bodies with Reed and being "rescued" by the Torch, Thing and Sue, he has them leave "Doom" imprisoned in a cell until they can decide what to do with him. Before they leave, Doom tells the imprisoned Reed Richards that the cell actually only has one hour of air. His death will allow Doom to remain in Reed's body forever. But Reed thinks his way out of the trap and escapes, making his way back to New York and finally to the FF. When they learn the truth, it is only after Doom has created a shrinking ray to use on the group. But when he's exposed, the shock causes him to switch bodies back again. In the ensuing struggle he's exposed to the ray of the reducing machine and shrinks out of sight—into seeming nothingness. More accurately, he shrinks into what is one of the Fantastic Four's greatest adventures.

What is interesting about this period (1963) is that Lee & Kirby introduced a concept which had largely been avoided in comics, that of a frequently-recurring villain. Ordinarily a comic book villain would only reappear every year or so, but the FF would bring one back in the following issue or after just a three issue lapse. The only time DC did anything similar was in 1960 when Grodd, the super-gorilla, appeared in three issues in a row (but even this was as the backup feature and he didn't appear on the cover the way Doom always does).

In FF #16, following some inexplicable encounters with spontaneous shrinking, the Fantastic Four seek out the advice and consultation of the Ant-Man, an acknowledged expert. They are also plagued by taunting, disembodied threats, as well as warnings which name Dr. Doom. Finally the FF take the reducing serum they obtained from Ant Man and plunge into a micro-world where Doom has seized power. When Doom relates how he appeared there, he describes arriving in that primitive, happy world and immediately observing, "The fools! They live in peace! They are contented and happy! But I'll soon put a stop to that!" Doom creates simple wonders for the rulers of that realm and works his way into their confidence, soon becoming personal scientist to the crown and gaining the

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materials to create weapons and other devices. Upon capturing the FF, he locks them up in preparation for trading them to the soon-to-arrive aliens from Tok. But while the imprisoned FF are preparing their escape, the Ant Man arrives. He's overwhelmed by guards but soon freed by the Invisible Girl, whereupon Doom realizes that the odds are now against him. Fleeing, he turns the enlarging ray on himself and is projected back to Earth where he can lay further traps to ensnare the Fantastic Four.

In FF #17 those traps are sprung.

While the FF are searching for the malevolent scientist, he is already hatching plots against them, first by disguising himself as a janitor and attaching tiny disks to their hands so that they can be followed and harrassed by strange, harmless, floating androids. But while observing them, Doom becomes aware of Alicia Masters. Rightly recognizing her as the link with which to strike at the FF, he kidnaps Alicia and imprisons her in his giant floating laboratory in the sky. Doom then sends a tape to the President of the U.S. and demands a cabinet post or he'll declare war on America. When the President refuses to comply, Doom uses his genius to disrupt both regular industry and the space program. Washington calls in the FF and a scheme is hatched to penetrate the disintegrator ray screen around Doom's airship. When the FF finally reach Doom and rescue Alicia, the armored menace leaps from his airship rather than be captured.

WHO IS DOOM?

But who is Dr. Doom really? **Fantastic Four Annual #2** (1964) reveals the entire story for the first time. While FF #5 had explained how Victor von Doom became Dr. Doom, his early life was still unknown. The origin of his armored appearance was also a mystery as it was not worn to mask his identity.

Victor von Doom is the son of gypsies Cynthia and Werner von Doom. His mother, a practicioner of the black arts, dies when Victor is very young and his father just a few years later. Victor is old enough to understand what has happened to his father: the elder von Doom was hunted by soldiers of a baron whose cancer-stricken wife Werner was unable to save. An embittered young Victor vows vengeance on all mankind. As he matures, he discovers his mother's secrets and uses the knowledge to prey on the Latverian aristocracy. When a visitor from America offers Victor a scholarship to State University, von Doom accepts it. It will give him access to the latest scientific equipment. While testing a device he'd built to contact the netherworld (later revealed to be one of his attempts to communicate with the spirit of his dead mother, Cynthia), the machine explodes and Doom is injured. His face heals but a slight scar remains, an imperfection that he cannot tolerate. Expelled from school, von Doom wanders off into the remoteness of Tibet. There he is taken in by an order of monks who possess arcane secrets which Victor learns during his years among them. Finally he becomes their master and they construct a suit of armor for him of his design. He places the mask on his face before it has completely cooled, thereby further damaging his face (which Doom already perceives as being completely ruined). Returning to Latveria, Doom overthrows a malevolent monarch and installs himself as ruler. Surprisingly, he is a benevolent ruler as he loves the land of his birth, harboring no ill will towards the common people but only towards the corrupt aristocracy, a class he abolishes as one of his first acts as dictator. As a national ruler, von Doom has diplomatic immunity when visiting America.

Castle Doom, his residence and sanctum sanctorum, is a 16th Century castle he took occupancy of after usurping the throne of King Vladimir. Doom is himself briefly exiled when ousted by Prince Zorba, rightful heir to the throne. Zorba proves to be a despot once in power, and brings ruination to the land until defeated by von Doom. Victor then restores order and prosperity to Latveria. But while the populace lives in fear and awe of their armored monarch, Doom would never knowingly bring harm down on them.

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When he falls out of their sight beneath the clouds, Doom activates his jet pack and flies to a new hideaway. Realizing that he cannot defeat the FF alone, he decides to once again seek an ally. Believing that Spider-Man is a villain (thanks to the editorial tirades of publisher J. Jonah Jameson), Doom figures out how to contact the web-swinger using his spider-sense. But he has no more intention of playing straight with Spider-Man than he did with Namor. (It seems Doom only learns from such mistakes so that he can thus repeat them exactly.)

ALONG CAME A SPIDER

When Spider-Man arrives, he doesn't know what to expect and is startled to find Dr. Doom. When Doom offers a partnership against the FF, Spider-Man is amused but replies, "I need you like I need another nose!" Doom is furious, proclaiming that, "If you are not with me, then we are deadly foes!" There is a brief battle, but Spidey wisely choses to flee. Doom feels that he can still use Spider-Man to his advantage.

Doom rigs up a device to capture Spider-Man, but through a quirk of fate captures a Flash Thompson dressed up as Spider-Man to frighten Peter Parker instead. It is Parker's presence that the machine correctly detects, but Doom incorrectly assumes that because someone is close by in a Spider suit, this is his quarry. When Doom announces that he has Spider-Man prisoner and demands the surrender of the FF, the real Spider-Man decides to confront the bad Doctor head on. The fact that Doom isn't expecting him is to his advantage. Their battle is a royal one and the good guys get the upper hand when the FF arrive, so Doom flees. He's not prepared to deal with the FF and Spider-Man all at the same time.

SPACE EXPLOIT

"The Master Plan of Doctor Doom" in FF #23 starts cleverly, but isn't as flamboyant as past endeavors to smash the colorful quartet. He bails three criminals out from jail. Using yet another special device, he enhances their special abilities so that Yogi Dakor becomes flameproof instead of merely resistant to flame; Bull Brogin's strength is multiplied a dozen times while Handsome Harry's hearing is enhanced so that he can hear the Invisible Girl moving no matter where she may hide. They successfully capture The Thing, the Torch and the Invisible Girl and then lure Mr. Fantastic into a trap. But Dr. Doom is unaware of Sue Storm's newly expanded powers, which include an invisible force field. She uses this to free the Thing who in turn frees the others. Doom still manages to spring his trap by escaping from the room containing the FF, a room covered by an ionic dust which when exposed to a special solar wave causes everything to be transported to a distant region of space (actually a different part of our solar system). As the room begins to dissolve, Sue traps Doom on the other side of the wall by using her force field. Doom panics and reaches into the room to attempt to undo the effects of the ionic dust. But The Thing angrily pulls Doom the rest of the way in and the villain falls into space and out of sight.

Well, not entirely out of sight. Rather, Doom is sighted by the spaceship of Rama-Tut, whom the FF had encountered in the past (FF #20). Interestingly, Rama-Tut is from the future and is reputed to be a descendant of Dr. Doom. The time machine he uses is the same one Doom invented. Rama-Tut agrees to help Doom by returning him to Earth while he returns to the future. The two discuss the possibility that they may be the same man, and while they believe it plausible, it seems more likely that Rama-Tut is indeed just Doom's descendant.

When Doom returns to Earth, he strides boldly through the streets of New York and into the Latverian consulate. While there were rumors at that time of Doom's control of that nation, his leadership was still officially secret. The FF receive a special invitation to a reception at the Latverian embassy. There the Torch, Thing and Sue are slipped an hallucinogen in their drinks, which causes some havoc. When the FF return to their headquarters, they again encounter Doom, and following a battle, Reed and the monarch agree to duel face-to-face for the final victory. They drink a toast and use the Encephalo-Gun, which

powered by their minds, exerts an effect on the opponent, seemingly at last disintegrating Reed Richards. Doom stalks off gloating, not knowing that it was all an hallucination brought about by the effect of Reed's stronger intellect. so for the time being, Doom feels triumphant at the end of an encounter with the FF.

THE VENGEANCE OF DR. DOOM

In Latveria, Doom is being entertained by a conventional magician when the man asks to demonstrate his power of hypnosis. In doing so he discovers that Doom is already under a hypnotic spell. This discovery causes the spell to dissipate, whereupon Doom realizes that he has been tricked into believing that he has destroyed Reed Richards. Furious, Doom leaves Latveria aboard a powerful gyroscopic aircraft and takes over the Baxter Building HQ of the Fantastic Four.

Doom tracks down the FF and begins launching their own weapons against them, unaware that the quartet are powerless, the result of a recent attack by the Frightful Four. With the assistance of Daredevil, the FF manage to fight their way back to the Baxter Building. While Daredevil goes up the outside of their building, the FF have to enter through the front door and battle their way through their own security devices. But while Daredevil engages Doom in battle, it distracts him from the approach of the FF. When Daredevil grabs Dr. Doom, the monarch physically overpowers the Man Without Fear until the FF burst in. Reed Richards finds a recently developed device of his, The Stimulator, which is now recharged enough to use and uses it to revive all of their failed powers. Doom slips out to sabotage the Baxter Building (so that he can destroy it and much of the city in one blast) in anger over the reversal of what seemed to be his conquest of the Fantastic Four. But then The Thing intervenes, a fighting mad man who didn't want his powers revived. Ben knows that with Dr. Doom in their HQ, there was too much danger to indulge that wish. Furious, The Thing overcomes Doom's most powerful defenses to defeat the monarch more decisively than ever before. The Thing begins to destroy Doom's armor, shattering the gauntlet controls, ripping out wires and devices while the cloaked menace is helpless to stop him. Only the intervention of Reed Richards convinces The Thing not to seriously injure von Doom. The monarch hobbles off, his pride as severely shattered as his armor. No man has ever before humiliated Victor von Doom so completely.

In FF #43, Doctor Doom is briefly seen consulting with his physician over his injured hands and angrily waiting for them to heal so that he can once more attack the FF. That attack comes at the time of Reed and Sue's wedding.

WEDDING BELLS

When Doom reads about plans for the well-publicized wedding, he chooses that as the perfect moment to strike back at the foursome. He doesn't even need to be on hand to do it. With a weapon he calls the Emotion Charger, Doom fans the flames of hatred in many of the FF's past foes. They all respond by deciding to almost simultaneously attack the FF. This includes the Puppet Master, the Mole Man, the Red Ghost and his super apes, Kang the Conqueror, the Mad Thinker, the Gargoyle, the Super-Skrull, Hydra, the Cobra and Mr. Hyde, the Mandarin, the Enchantress and the Executioner, the Unicorn, Electro and more! Even the legions of Attuma rise from the harbor to invade New York. With the help of the X-Men, the Avengers and finally The Watcher, Reed Richards secures a device which reverses the invasion so that all of the villains involved return to the moment in time before they chose to attack. Even the one responsible is made to forget everything that happened. Thus Doom has no memory of the event either.

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THE SURFER

In **Fantastic Four** #57, The Silver Surfer lands, by chance, in Latveria. Sighting him, Doom sends a royal summons. The Surfer arrives and Doom takes him on a tour of his castle, slowly guiding him towards the laboratory while trying to convince the visitor that he is just a gentle, humble monarch. Then, when the Surfer's attention is diverted, Doom puts on one of his special devices which miraculously draws the power of the Surfer into himself, making Doom the master of cosmic energy! Now Doom at last possesses the power he needs to subjugate humanity. With the Surfer trapped in his dungeon, Doom flies off to New York on the cosmic board where he attacks and defeats the Fantastic Four. He then flies off to test his powers elsewhere. Meanwhile, Mr. Fantastic works on a device which may have a chance of stopping Doom. It's an anti-cosmic flying wing which he builds a prototype of so that Tony Stark and the Army will be able to build the full scale version to use against Doom. While it weakens Doom, it only angers him and he pursues the wing high into the atmosphere so that he may destroy it. But Doom has reckoned without the power of Galactus which keeps the Surfer on Earth, and that applies even to one who has stolen the Surfer's cosmic strength.

When Doom reaches the limit set by Galactus, it triggers a signal which alerts the planet eater. But when the astral image of Galactus appears and sees someone other than the Surfer, it returns Doom to his point of origin — without the Surfer's power.

MAN WITHOUT FEAR

Back in Latveria, Doom plotted until he chose to use Daredevil as his next victim. Kidnapping him in New York (not an easy feat), Doom brings DD to the Latverian embassy. There he switches bodies with Daredevil. Since Daredevil had once allied himself with the FF, in DD's body he could easily penetrate their security and confidence. But in Doom's body, Daredevil escapes and does the one thing that he knows will head off Doom and bring him running back to the embassy — he declares war on all of Latveria's border nations! Doom returns, switches to his own body and withdraws the declaration of war. But in order to have the last word and punish Daredevil for his cleverness, Doom duplicates DD's voice and sends a message to the FF, warning them that Dr. Doom is on the way there disguised as Daredevil! It has the desired effect. It takes all of FF #73, and the assistance of Spider-Man and Thor, to control the FF's counterattack. Only Sue Storm's witnessing of Dr. Doom's press conference on television convinces all concerned that they were set up.

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Apparently, even while all this is going on, Doom is also playing a game with his robotic creation The Prime Mover. In this game, SHIELD is pitted against humanoid lookalikes of the Yellow Claw and his minions. SHIELD wins, much to the annoyance of Doom.

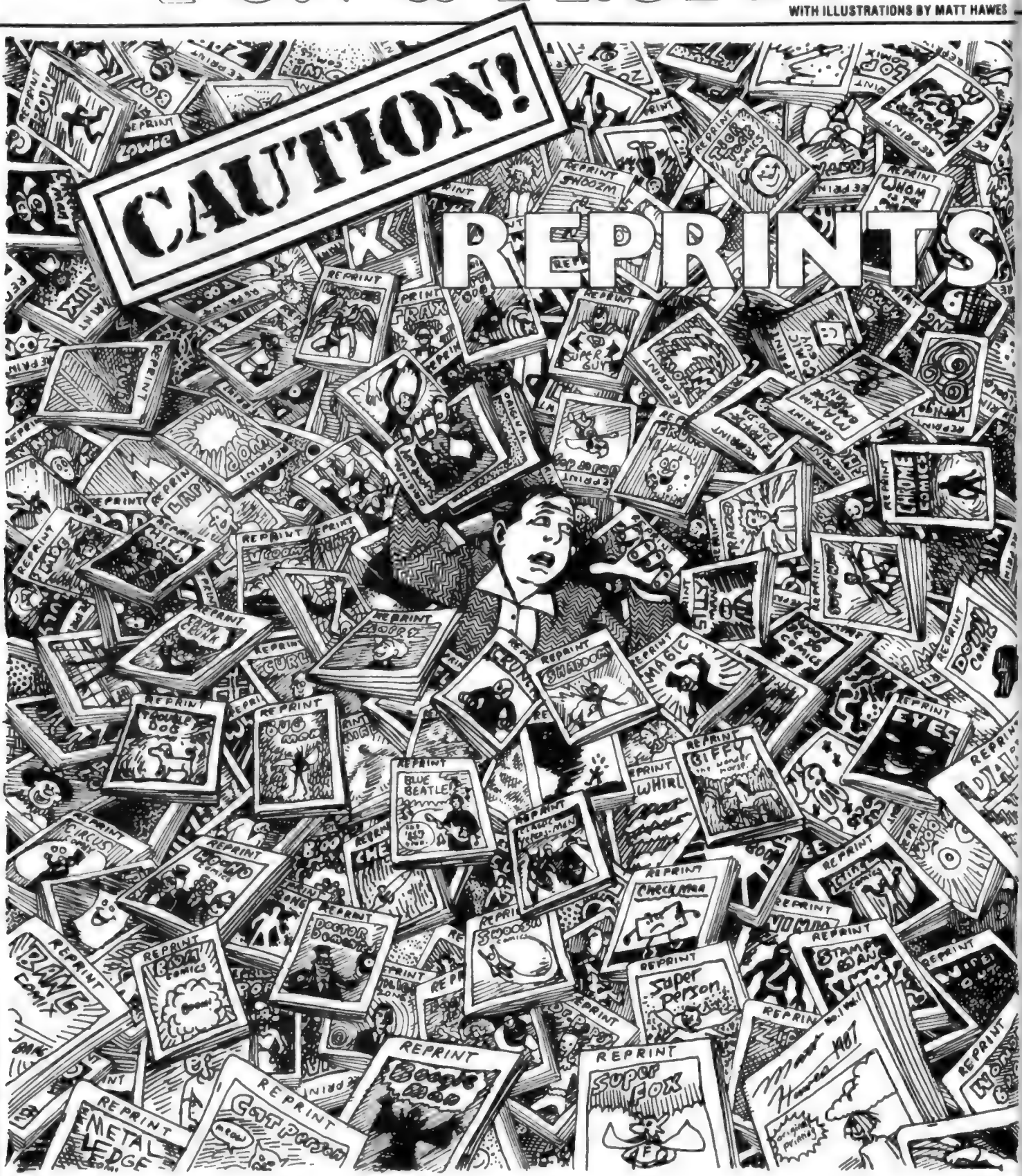
The Latverian's menacing plans continue and involve Thor, The Hulk, the X-Men and many others, as we shall see next issue in our continuing examination of Marvel's principal villain, the uncanny Dr. Doom! **CF**

JAMES VAN HISE is the former editor of one of the oldest fanzines in the comic book field, author of The Art of Al Williamson and editor of Monsterland.

FUN & PROFIT

BY MIKE BENTON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATT HAWES



Comic book reprints are a great way to read back issues that you might not be able to afford or find otherwise. At the same time, reprints usually lower the value of the very comics that they reprint.

Within the past year, collectors have seen the interesting effects of reprints on perhaps the most popular title of 1986, Frank Miller's **Dark Knight** four-issue series. So popular was the title, DC started reprinting it even before the series ended. DC even re-issued (reprinted) all four books in the series in a paperback and hardback edition. And licensed the rights for yet another paperback reprint in England.

So there are multiple reprint editions of the **Dark Knight** series now, and each edition has its own price.

What has been the effect of these reprints on such a popular series?

The most obvious result is that more comic readers and fans get to see Miller's work and that's fantastic. A less obvious effect is a subtle undermining of the investment mentality that fueled the fantastic sales of this title in the first place.

Do you think the book would have been so hot if all the investors and speculators knew in advance that it would be reprinted? No. Furthermore, the reprinting of these books will eventually cheapen the original Dark Knight editions. I for one will be very surprised if there is a strengthening or even continued demand for the first printings of this series.

So comic book reprints pose a real challenge for the reader and investor. On the one hand, reprints allow more people to experience the joy of comics. On the other, reprints steal money away from the investors who may have ironically contributed to the popularity that led to the reprinting of the book in the first place.

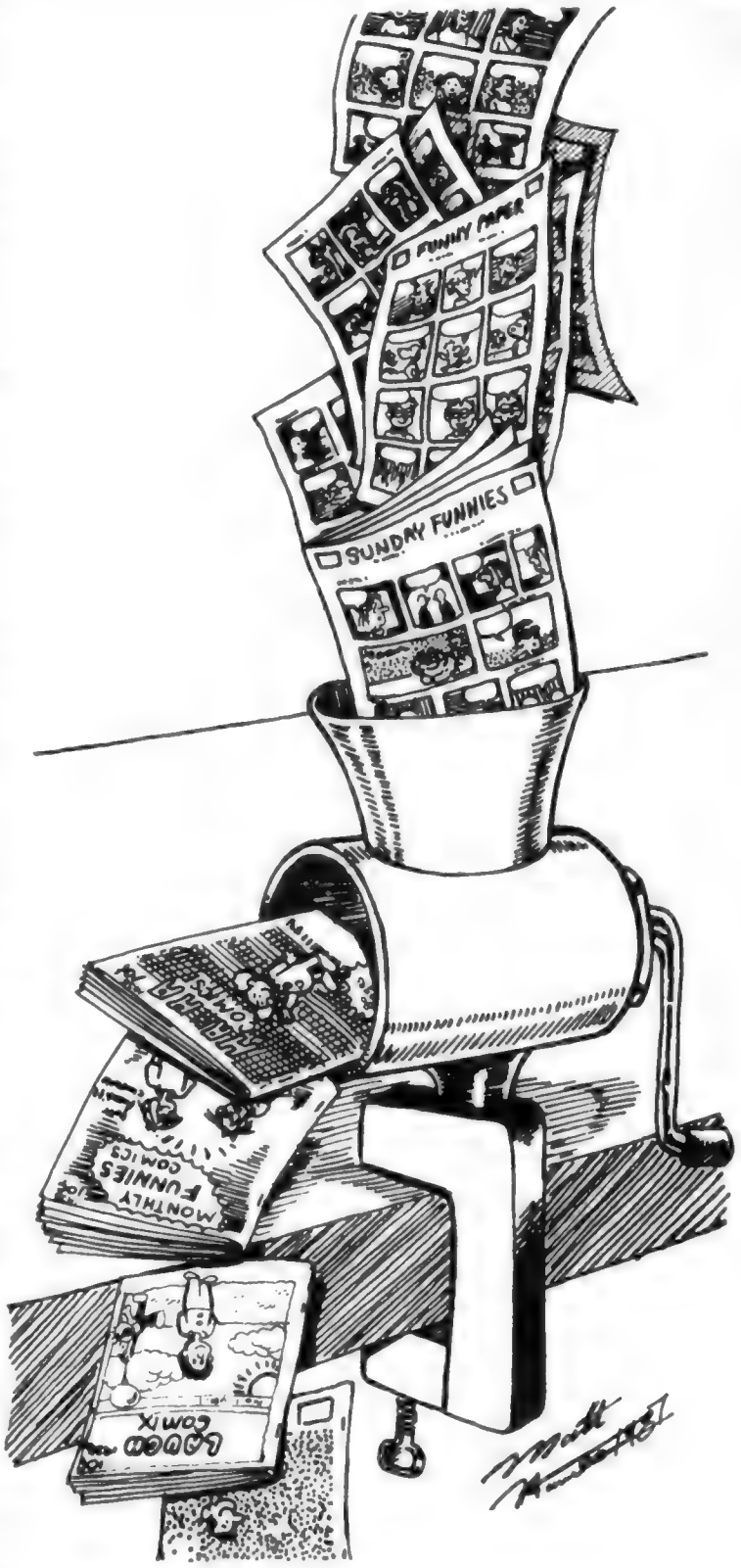
Before you buy another reprint comic (or spend big bucks on a comic that may be reprinted!), you need to know the facts.

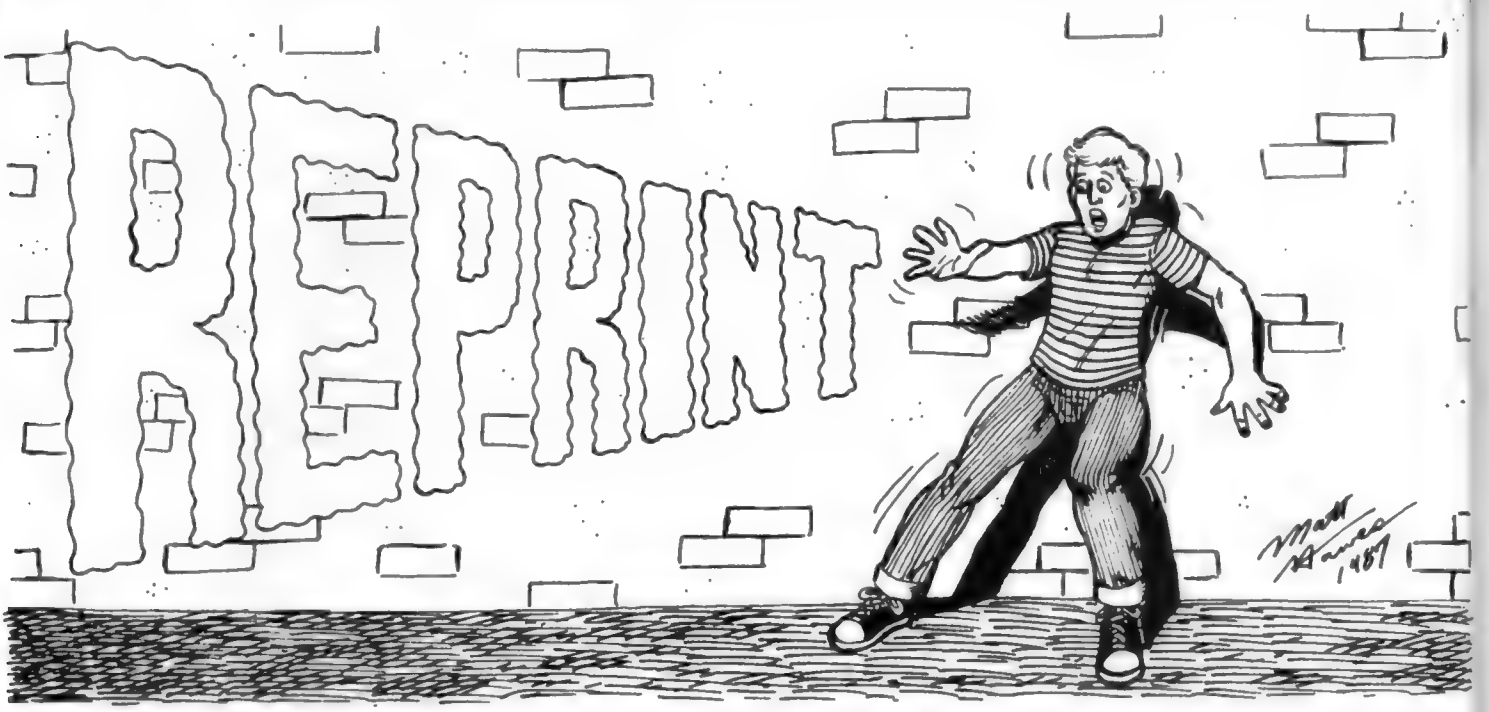
THE HISTORY OF COMIC BOOK REPRINTS

The very first comic book published was a reprint. **Funnies on Parade** (published in 1933) reprinted the most popular newspaper strips of the day. After its resounding success, **Famous Funnies** (another collection of strip reprints) hit the newsstands, and all of a sudden publishers were scrambling to reprint the Sunday comics in book form.

For awhile, it appeared that the comic books were to be nothing more than reprint collections of the popular newspaper strips. As their popularity continued, however, it became quickly apparent that the demand for comic books was outstripping the available supply of newspaper strips that could be reprinted. **Ace**, **King** and **Magic** comics, along with about six other titles, had begun to sew up the market on reprints.

Obviously if the new comic books were to survive, they would have to branch out to original material. And so they





did. By 1938, all new comics were appearing on the stands and now their covers proclaimed—"ALL NEW! NO REPRINTS!"

Although born of reprint material, the exciting new comics of the late thirties and early forties quickly abandoned their origins as they introduced more and more original superheroes and characters created especially for the comic books.

THE EARLY REPRINTS

All through the golden decade of the 1940s, comic books by and large avoided reprinted material. There were still the sporadic collections of reprinted comic strips, but no company seriously considered reprinting comic *books*.

The closest thing to comic book reprints came about in the late 1940s when some publishers gathered returned issues of their books that didn't sell and rebound them into "annuals"—giant-size collections of generally four recovered comics. The first EC annuals and giant size Fox crime, romance and jungle comics were nothing but unsold comics rebound with new covers.

In the early 1950s, Dell comics reprinted some of the early Little Lulu stories in an annual, as well as a collection of Pogo stories from **Animal Comics** by Walt Kelly.

In 1960, DC Comics issued the first **Superman Annual**, which reprinted the origin of Supergirl from **Action Comics #252**. This is particularly noteworthy because **Action** 252 had only come out the year before!

For the first time, comic publishers acknowledged that their readers wanted to read the older stories (reprints, if you will) of their favorite characters.

DC continued this successful new format of issuing 80 page annuals of reprints for 25 cents throughout the 1960s. Readers were treated to reprint collections of Batman and Superman stories from the 1940s and 1950s. For most comic readers at that time, the DC reprint annuals were bargain flight tickets back to the Golden Age of comics.

Marvel Comics issued their first giant collection of reprints in 1962. **Strange Tales Annual #1** reprinted stories from 1958 to 1960 of giant monsters drawn by Jack Kirby and tales of fantasy illustrated by Steve Ditko. They came from the early pre-superhero incarnations of **Journey Into Mystery**, **Tales To Astonish** and, of course, **Strange Tales**. The next year would see **Strange Tales Annual #2** with reprints *plus* an all new Spider-Man and Human Torch teamup story. Like the other early Marvel and DC annuals, it was a quarter well spent.

At the same time, Archie Comics was also turning to reprints to fill some of the many annuals that they published during the 1950s and 1960s.

For awhile, it appeared that reprint collections were a marriage made in heaven for comic book publishers and readers. The readers loved seeing older stories from the past, and the publishers made money from material already paid for. Yet, in a few years, the word "reprint" would become a curse instead of a benediction uttered by collectors.

THE GREAT COMIC REPRINT DELUGE

In the mid to late 1960s, Marvel Comics found themselves the emerging leaders in the comic book field. Their rapid growth, however, was not without pain. The relatively small and overworked Marvel staff realized one

day that the deadline for one of their titles had come and there was no new issue ready for press.

Their solution? Draw a new one or two page introduction, and reprint a story from the past to fill out the issue.

"Not fair!" cried the readers who wanted all new adventures of their favorite heroes. Marvel soon abandoned the reprint fill-in practice, and instead produced original fill-ins that could be dropped into place should the "dreaded deadline doom" catch them again.

Although Marvel stopped bombing their readers with unexpected (and unwanted) reprints in their regular titles, the increased demand by a growing collector base for anything that was a Marvel comic made reprints look very tempting.

In the mid-1960s, Marvel began publishing **Marvel Tales** as their reprint vehicle. Soon this was followed by **Marvel's Collectors' Item Classics** and **Marvel Super-heroes**.

By the early 1970s, the lure of easy money from reprinting comics was too great. Marvel launched a whole line of reprint comics (**Marvel Triple Action**, **Marvel Double Action**, **Marvel Super Action**, **Fantasy Masterpieces**, etc., etc.) that reprinted the Avengers, Captain America, Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, Thor, Daredevil, the X-Men and so on.

By the mid-'70s, Marvel looked as if it was determined to dominate the entire comic book marketplace by its sheer number of titles (both originals *and* reprints). They reprinted literally hundreds of their older "giant crab-monster invaders from Mars" stories from their defunct pre-superhero titles of the 1950s—stories that many readers argued deserved to remain buried in the pulpy past.

DC Comics was not standing idly by during Marvel's great reprint flood. They countered back by increasing the size of their regular comic titles to 100 pages, and filling up most of those 100 pages with—you got it—reprints.

With the sheer number of reprint comic titles during the 1970s, it was inevitable that there would be a collector backlash.

As readers got their bellies full of reprinted comics that rarely rated recycling, Marvel quietly dropped all but a couple of their more popular reprint series. **Marvel Tales** with Spider-Man reprints was kept as their flagship reprint title. DC, in turn, knocked the reprints out of their bloated titles, and returned to a 32 page, all new material format.

Clearly the love and joy that collectors used to greet reprinted comic classics had turned to a suspicious and cynical attitude that they and the marketplace were being manipulated by the publishers.

Yet, the reprints would return in the 1980s, and this time they would be wearing trappings that would win back the love of collectors.

MODERN REPRINTS

With the emergence of the collector's market, comic book stores, direct market sales and new comic book formats, the time was right to reintroduce reprints in a new way.

Now publishers were selecting classic comics from the 1960s to reprint on high-quality paper in a collector album format. Instead of indiscriminately recycling old stories, the publishers were now preserving some of their best work from the past. Even if you owned the originals, the new reprint formats were a must to buy.

Because of their higher quality paper and better production values, these reprints were sometimes superior to the originals. Furthermore, a reprint allowed a collector to store away the original comic and enjoy the less valuable reprint as a reading copy.

REPRINTS TODAY

Today, reprinted comics are an exciting part of the collector's marketplace. From the large hardback collections of Carl Barks work to the full-color albums of EC stories, comic shops are full of worthwhile and high quality reprints.

Yet there are other aspects of reprints today that many collectors find disturbing. And there is a very good reason why you too should be closely watching the reprints. The reason is—money.

REPRINT LOSERS AND WINNERS

Imagine this. You've been saving money for months so you could finally buy the run of **X-Men** comics with Neal Adams art (#s 56 through 63). You get a deal on all eight books for $75 in mint condition. You saved about $50 and you're happy that you got some good investment books.

Next month you walk into your local comics store and there on the stands is a new title called **X-Men Classics** that reprints these same comics for less than a buck apiece. How would you feel?

"Screwed," said a younger collector. "In one month, the books I bought just lost half their value. Worse yet, nobody is interested in buying them at all since they were just reprinted."

Like it or not, reprints always lower the demand for the comics that they reprint. Less demand means a softening (if not lowering) of price for those books. As a collector, your collection loses value when books are reprinted.

Just how much a reprint lowers the original book's value is a source of debate. In fact, what generally happens is that dealers (and price guides!) usually ignore the effect of reprints on a back issue's price. The printed price or back issue price remains the same.

So how do reprints hurt a collector if the price of the original does not decrease in the guide?

Simple. A collector will discover when he tries to sell his original comics that dealers will not be anxious to pay a

fair guide price for the book. Why? The reprints have dried up most of the collector demand for the book.

There is a silver lining to the cloud of reprints. Top condition books (Very Fine to Mint) always hold their value, regardless of reprints. In fact, reprints can actually increase the demand for a top condition copy of the original comic among collectors who may have never otherwise wanted the original until they saw it reprinted.

The real losers in the reprint fallout are those high-dollar books in Good to Fine condition. Casual collectors will go for the cheaper reprinted version instead of a lower condition copy of the original. At the same time, investors will shy even farther away from a low grade book if they know it has been reprinted.

ILLEGAL REPRINTS: COUNTERFEIT BOOKS

There are two other areas that collectors need to exercise caution about when it comes to reprinted comics: counterfeits and forgeries.

First, understand that it is very difficult to counterfeit or illegally reprint a color comic. It requires a lot of skill and about $10,000 to $12,000 to fix up a halfway convincing counterfeit color reprint.

On the other hand, black and white comics can be reprinted illegally for under $2,000, and they are much, much easier to counterfeit to fool the casual collector.

The most famous counterfeit incident of a black and white comic is the one involving **Cerebus the Aardvark #1**.

The book was illegally reprinted, and then quickly taken all around the country and sold to many unsuspecting comic book shop owners.

Many dealers (and collectors!) bit on this one, and were out thousands of dollars.

For this reason, I always urge extreme caution when purchasing black and white comics that have a collector's value over $50. You might be buying a reprint.

Another way that collectors have been cheated with reprints is to pass off a coverless *reprint* as a coverless *original* comic. I've seen pages of **Fantastic Four #3** that were razor-cut from a reprint annual and then passed off as a coverless copy of the original **FF#3**.

Even more amazing are the incidents that involve selling the giant-size treasury reprint editions of **Action Comics #1**, **Batman #1**, etc. as original Golden Age issues. What's so astounding about this reprint rip-off ruse is that the reprints are about four times the size of the original comic book. You would think collectors would notice.

G.I. JOE MEETS THE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

The last area where reprints and money meet that collectors should be aware of is the now frequent reprinting of comics that have a high collector demand.

For instance, Marvel Comics has reprinted some of its more popular titles, such as **Star Wars** and **G.I. Joe**. Many

times, the reprints are hard to distinguish from the originals.

As a result, younger collectors who are collecting **G.I. Joe** often buy reprints of that title at the full price for the originals. Some dealers make an honest mistake in pricing the reprints at the same price as the originals. Other dealers just make money.

The biggest problem in the reprint area, however, is not with Marvel, DC, or most of the color comic publishers. Black and white comics are definitely reprinted far more often.

One popular black and white comic has undergone four reprintings of its first issue. It's not at all uncommon for a black and white publisher to simply reprint a comic when it has reached a certain back issue value in the marketplace. Needless to say, this shoots the heck out of any stability for a long-term investment.

I LOVE REPRINTS

For all these warnings and notes of caution, I got to admit: I love reprints!

I've read hundreds of comics and comic strips in a reprint format because I simply could not afford the originals. Reprints make the entire comic field more accessible to newcomers. How else could a beginning collector sample stories from the Golden Age, enjoy the artwork of an EC comic, or laugh at a Donald Duck story printed before he was born?

In fact, I would strongly suggest that beginning collectors make full use of the reprints available today. You can even build an entire collection of some of your favorite titles (like **Spider-Man**, **X-Men**, etc.) by smartly buying reprints to fill in your collection gaps.

A reprinted comic is a great way to preserve and extend the life of the original comic as well. Even if you own the original comic, you should buy the reprint version to read, and store the more valuable original away.

Don't forget too that comics have been reprinted in other formats than the traditional 32-page color book. The hardback collections of reprint comics and strips now number over 500, and more are published every month.

Do be aware, however, that a reprint will rarely achieve a high collector's value. There are a few exceptions where a reprint comic is worth money—some reprint comics from the 1960s that reprinted comics from the 1940s are now worth from $1 to $20.

Most of the reprint comics today, however, can still be had as back issues for less than $1. It is doubtful if these will ever make money for you, but they will give you hours and hours of reading pleasure at a fraction of the cost of the originals.

Long live reprints! **CF**

MIKE BENTON is the author of Comic Book Collecting for Fun and Profit and a leading expert on investments in rare comic books.

TIPS FOR COLLECTORS

What can we as comic collectors and investors learn from this about comic book reprints? Simply this:

(1) Do not pay a high price for a black and white comic.
You may be either buying a counterfeit, or the book itself is likely to be reprinted and thrash your investment.

(2) Be aware that some popular color comics have undergone reprintings.
Make sure you're getting an original and not a reprint if you are paying the price of an original.

(3) Be leery of investing large sums of money in titles (and publishers) that have a tradition of being reprinted.
For example, I think that the **G.I. Joe** reprints have done more to discredit this title than anything else in the eyes of collectors.

(4) Be cautious in buying back issues that have been or may be likely candidates for reprinting.
Always be aware of when a publisher is planning a reprint, as you may want to sell your originals before the reprints flood the market.

(5) Buy reprints that have a built-in collectibility factor.
For example, a well produced reprint done in a nice format of a popular title/character will always have a basic value and worth.

THE COMICS FEATURE

A WORK IN PROGRESS

MARVEL'S MUTANT UNIVERSE

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BY JAMES VAN HISE

A new artist for the X-Men, the fate of the Angel, the destiny of Magneto, several new mini-series, and lots of exclusive inside secrets...

We would like to publicly acknowledge our debt to the incredible kindness of the staff of Marvel Comics in providing the wonderful artwork for this feature. We certainly didn't expect the wealth of beautiful material, including much that could be seen in pencils prior to inking. It is a rare treat for all fans, including us.

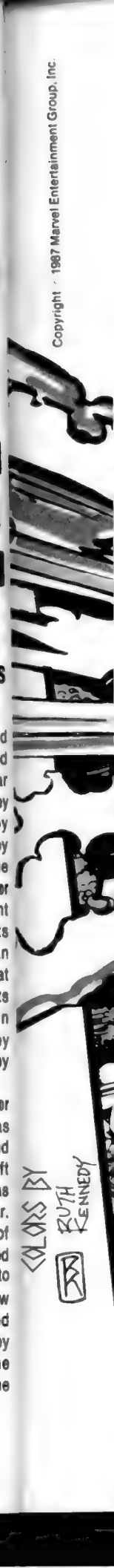
In the wake of the Mutant Massacre, it is evident that Marvel's Mutant Universe is in for some big changes! The X-Men have changed their lineup, bringing back old members such as Havok, and adding new ones such as Dazzler and Longshot. X-Factor is watching their cover story dissolve before their eyes. The New Mutants have been targeted for domination by the Hellfire Club. Crossovers are springing up; even Kitty Pryde's seemingly permanent fadeout is being handled in **Fantastic Four Vs. The X-Men**. Magneto is once again confronting the consequences of his past in **X-Men Vs. The Avengers**.

In the Eighties, mutants are more popular than they ever were in the Sixties. **Classic X-Men** is introducing the early adventures of the new X-Men to new readers who are unable to afford the premium prices for the original issues. With the addition of the reprint title (which also includes new material to entice old readers), there are now four regular monthly mutant books: **The X-Men, The New Mutants, X-Factor** and **Classic X-Men**. And if that isn't enough to satisfy mutant fanatics, there's the frequent mini-series to stir things up. Mutants may be unpopular within their own universe, but in ours they can't be beat!

X-FACTOR: CONTRADICTIONS

X-Factor was launched under a cloud of controversy. It seemed to be created solely to have yet another popular mutant title. It also brought Jean Grey (Marvel Girl/Phoenix) back to life by undercutting the continuity created by **X-Men** writer Chris Claremont. But the most controversial aspect of **X-Factor** was their premise — exploiting mutant hysteria in order to uncover mutants and rescue them. They even ran television ads sowing distrust so that people would turn suspected mutants over to them. While X-Factor would in actuality protect them, the way they were going about it was on very shakey moral ground.

Right from the beginning, **X-Factor** had problems. Their first editor was replaced after one issue. The writer and co-creator of the title, Bob Layton, left the book a few issues later. That was when Louise Simonson took over. Already recognized for her creation of **Power Pack**, her work was much admired by Chris Claremont and she intended to straighten out the problems she saw inherent in the series. This included pulling back on the mutant-baiting by the group. Much of the cover of the group has already been blown by the



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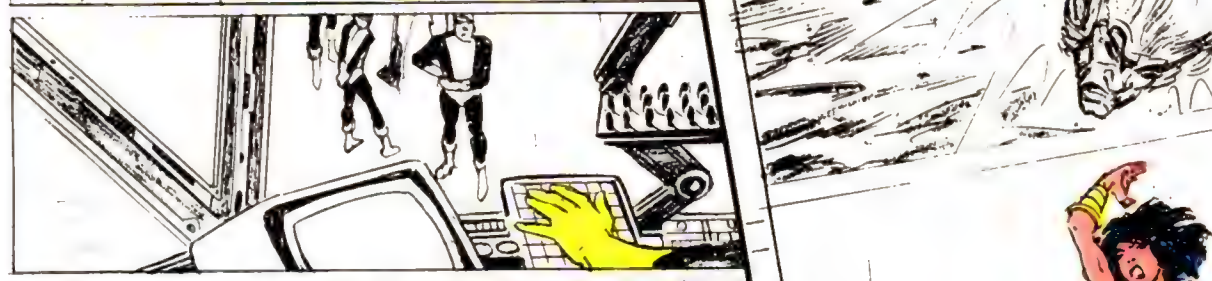
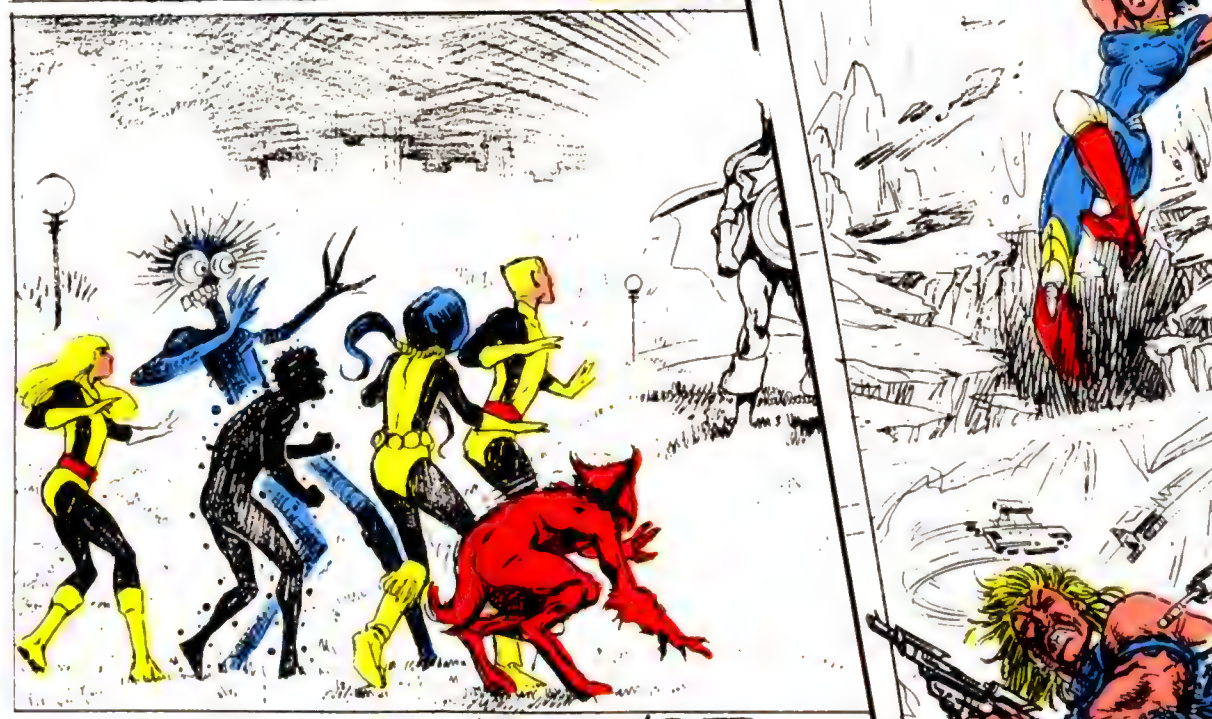
Book X-MEN

Issue# 219





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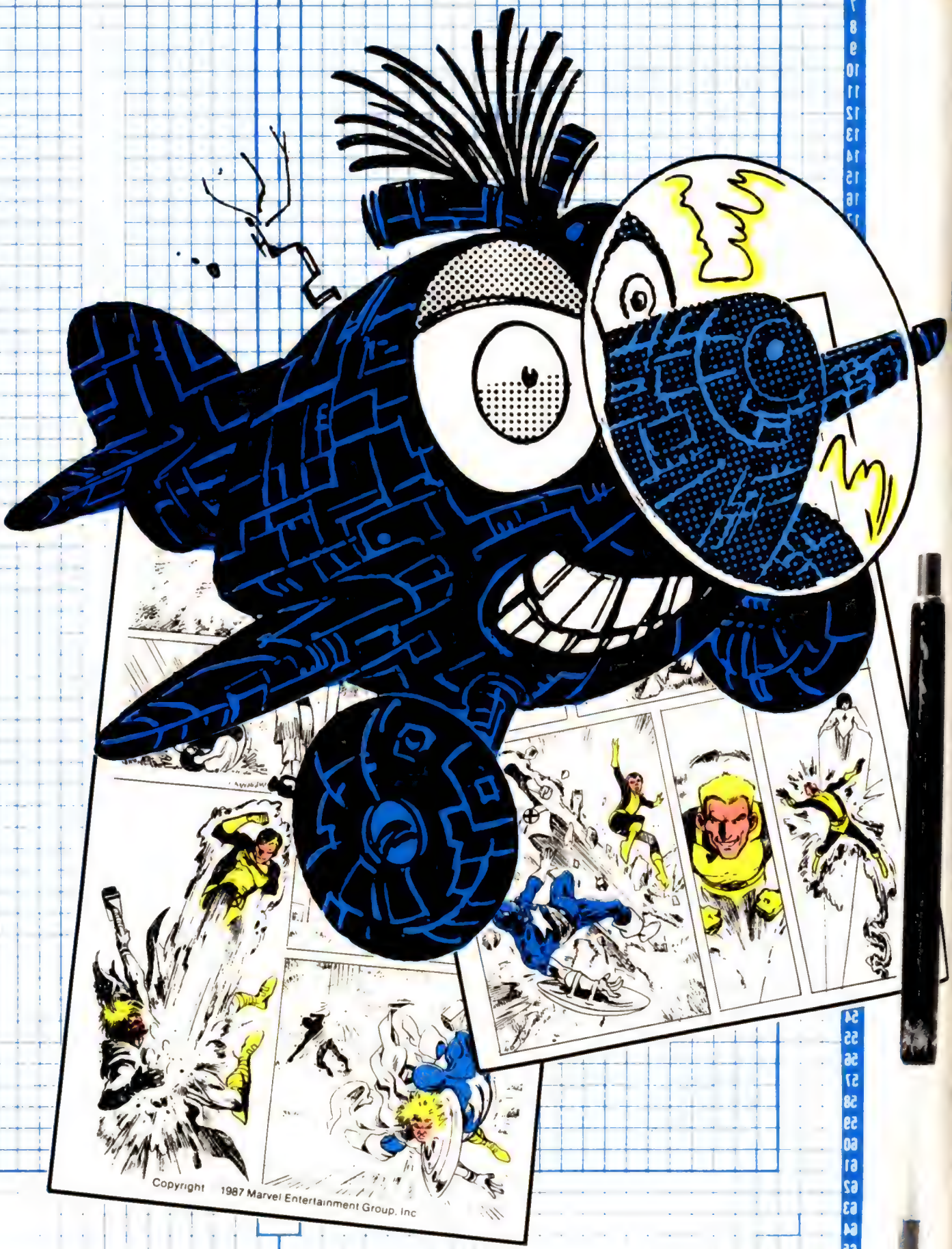
revelation of its backing by Warren Worthington III — well known as The Angel. While the superhero aspect of their existence is still secret, "I can't promise that they're going to be low key for very much longer," Louise states. "I think the whole thing is about to blow wide open. They will soon be less underground than they were before."

When Louise took over **X-Factor** she had a very specific vision as to where she wanted the series to go. "It seems to be moving in that direction and it should be there pretty thoroughly by issue 25," she reveals, "since that's a pivotal issue. We're going to put the characters through a lot of changes before then." These changes will be affecting virtually every character in the group.

"Scott (Cyclops) is going to be in the process of cracking up, which anyone would do under the circumstances, but we'll put him back together again," she promises. Scott Summers has always been a very introverted character, and one who isn't very good at expressing his innermost feelings. "He's going to become less good at expressing his feelings and that's going to create a lot of problems for him. He's got them bottled up inside so that finally when they explode there will be a huge fight between him and Jean with them slamming each other with their powers." And that's just the start.

Most currently, The Angel has had his wings clipped and has seemingly been killed in a plane crash. "I guess everyone knows he's not really dead," Louise admits, "even though his plane blew up in issue 15. Angel has always been a very light-hearted character, but he'll be going through very serious physical changes that will result in personality changes as well."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The first member of X-Factor to undergo radical changes was The Beast. He had been blue, furry and fun-loving for years. Then he was captured and subjected to a treatment which caused Hank McCoy to lose his furry features and revert to looking like the normal human being he was when the X-Men were founded. "I can understand why Jim Shooter wanted that done," Louise explains, "because he wanted to go back to the original X-Men."

Plans are afoot for the Beast which will introduce as much trouble for him as some of the other characters are already experiencing. "Right now The Beast is in pretty good shape, but in three or four issues he's going to be in bad shape when X-Factor meets Apocalypse. What's going to happen will be an extension of what was done to him before. It's a question I could answer only I'm reluctant to because I don't want to spoil things for people. He's not going to go back to being blue and furry, though," Louise states, aware that some fans did prefer him that way. "Something else is going to happen. At least through issue 28 or so he's not going to go back to being furry — after that anything goes." Which gives us some hint on long range plans. But even though The Beast isn't the fun-loving elf he was in recent years, Louise doesn't feel that his personality is all that different now. "As far as his being a light-hearted, happy-go-lucky character, I think that he still is. I haven't made him a particularly dark character by any means."

A lot of fans are surprised that after more than a dozen issues, X-Factor and The X-Men have not yet crossed paths. So far this has been because of X-Factor's suspicion of Magneto being in charge at Prof. X's School for Gifted Youngsters. Others might think that for this very reason X-Factor would look more closely at what's going on there. This facet is not being ignored as evidenced by Wolverine's near madness after encountering the scent of Jean Grey, something he knows has to be impossible. But he also knows that his senses never lie! Will the two groups encounter each other face to face? Will they finally learn the truth about Jean Grey?

"I think that they're still going to be avoiding each other for quite awhile unless Chris decides that he wants to do something different," Louise states.

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"Chris has a storyline worked out that will go on pretty far into the future which will take the X-Men away from New York and away from any possible connection with X-Factor for some time," Louise reveals.

In the meantime, X-Factor will have many other problems to contend with, including an assault from Asgard.

"We have an issue coming up where Iceman is kidnapped by Loki to repower the Frost Giants, which will result in his powers going out of control. He'll be much more powerful than he ever was before. Things freeze around him that he can't unfreeze." She compares it to someone hitting the on switch — and it stays there.

Most readers have thought that the Mutant Massacres referred only to the several titles running the interconnected story of the deaths in the Morlock tunnels. But that storyline is by no means concluded. The Marauders are still loose and what few Morlocks survived are trying to put their lives back together.

"Caliban is going to be joining X-Factor," Louise explains, "and while he'll be very happy to be a part of the team, he'll become more and more dissatisfied with what is happening. What he really wants to do is track down and kill the Marauders." But while the X-Men will continue to fight the Marauders, the two groups will be battling the same foes independently.

Other plans for X-Factor include a limited series to be drawn by **Power Pack** artist Jon Bogdanov. At this point it isn't certain whether it will involve crossovers with other heroes but it is set for summer release. The regular title does have some immediate plans for crossovers, though.

"I think there's going to be a crossover with **The Hulk** pretty soon, and then there's the one of Iceman in **Thor**, but there won't be anything really major along those lines until next summer."

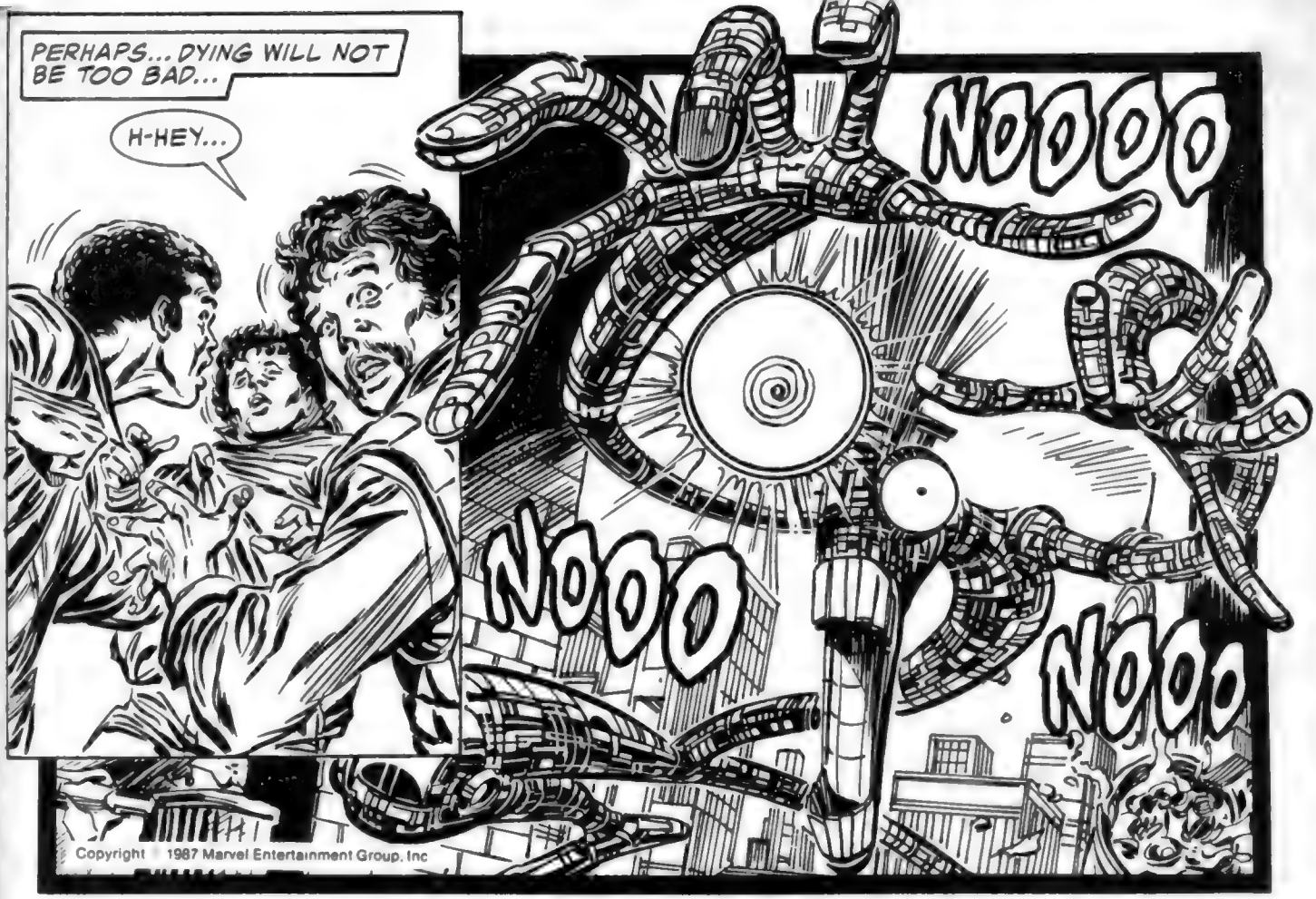
There are certainly more than enough catastrophic events happening in **X-Factor** to keep them busy for awhile. In issue 15, the plane crashed with him aboard. Since Warren Worthington III has been the financial backer of the organization, with him gone X-Factor is thrown into complete disarray.

Issue 16, titled "Playing With Fire," is drawn by **Daredevil** and **Batman** artist, David Mazzucchelli. It deals with a plot element introduced in the very first issue. There was girl that the kid, Rusty, burned. The story deals with his responsibility for what happened to her," Louise explains. "She'd been badly burned and because of Warren's death there's a question as to whether X-Factor will be able to provide the funds for her rehabilitation. X-Factor is going to be dealing with the repercussions of what happened to Warren for quite awhile. The climactic battle in issue 25, which will be a double-sized issue, has Apocalypse and deals very much with all that."

But how long will The Angel be dead?

"That's a good question," Louise replies. He may be dead for a long time, "or maybe not too long," she adds. "We'll see." Certainly The Angel will be "dead" long enough to complicate the lives and plotlines of a lot of characters.

Louise will also be temporarily filling in for Chris Claremont on **New Mutants** #55-60. "What I'm doing is a six-issue continuity involving a manufactured mutant called Birdbrain — a gene-spliced combination of human and bird. He's been trained through torture and feeding reinforcement and looks on the world as 'food' and 'not-food'. 'Food' is good; 'not-food' is bad."



FALLEN ANGELS

The New Mutants are going to be splitting up for a time. The result will be **The Fallen Angels**, a group formed by default when Sunspot goes off on his own and Warlock follows him. Along the way they encounter others who regard themselves as outcasts. This includes Maddrox (the multiplying man), Siryn, a "glitter queen" alien girl named Ariel, and a strange street kid named Gomi who has two intelligent purple and green lobsters as sidekicks! And if you think that's odd, in the last two issues of the mini-series they encounter Devil Dinosaur and Moon Boy, two of the odder characters created at Marvel by Jack Kirby in the mid-Seventies — and not seen since.

"The basic premise of the series," says writer Jo Duffy, "is that being a mutant is like being an adolescent. You hit a point in your life when your body starts changing on you in ways you never expected and you're convinced that there's nobody in the world who's ever been like you. I figured that being a mutant and an adolescent simultaneously is sort of like psychological double-jeopardy. It's a funny age but also an age when you take yourself much more seriously than is warranted."

Fallen Angels was originally conceived by Jo Duffy when she was at a comic convention in Texas with Chris Claremont and Texan Kerry Gammill. "The three of us started talking about a new book that Jo and Ann Nocenti were planning called **The Misfits**," Gammill recalls. "Jo was excited about borrowing Chris's New Mutant characters. They looked at each other and then at me and Jo and suggested to Chris that I might be the right one to pencil the series.

"I've mainly been doing what you would call 'old standby' characters for the last few years," Gammill continues, "pretty much your average superhero stuff — which this book really isn't — and this is a good opportunity for me to get into some stranger characters. So far, Warlock has been my favorite character to draw — he's very challenging because he's basically pure emotion. His whole body expresses what he's thinking. It's tough because it forces me to think very creatively about emotion and express it in Warlock's crazy body language."

Jamie Maddrox, the Multiple Man, and Siryn (Banshee's daughter) have appeared in **The X-Men** but have not been featured very prominently before this.

"These are two characters who haven't gotten very much attention," states Gammill, "and I'm looking forward to being able to bring them more into the forefront and giving them their own definitive look, as well as doing something creative with their powers.

"Ariel, the alien whose people are after her, is very interesting to work with," Kerry continues. "She's really not too alien looking, except that she has a kind of glitter all over her body and she dresses very flamboyantly — very modern. For reference for the clothes she wears I had to go to book stores and buy all the young women's and teen magazines in order to make sure that she's dressed right for the Eighties tone of the characters. I haven't kept up really with what the young girls are wearing lately so that was a fun experience!"

But **Fallen Angels** (formerly titled **The Misfits**) is not all fun and games. The stories will explore the same sort of turbulent emotions that many teenagers are undergoing today.

"Kids today are under a lot of peer pressure — they sometimes need to retreat behind masks of one sort or another to shield them," Gammill explains. "The thought that kids like the Fallen Angels are going through some of the same things they are — well, it gives them something to identify with. I'm trying to make the Fallen Angels as much like real kids as possible. Jo's making that very easy for me."

THE X-MEN AGAINST THE WORLD

While the **Fantastic Four vs. The X-Men** limited series is just coming to a close, an even more far-reaching limited series has just begun. **The X-Men Vs. The Avengers** is a clash far more devastating in its possibilities than when the groups first met way back in **X-Men #9**. Written by Roger Stern and illustrated by Marc Silvestri (new artist on the regular **X-Men** book) and inked by Joe Rubinstein, this limited series confronts the fact that while Magneto has changed his ways and turned his back on his evil mutant past, the world cannot forget the often heinous deeds he was guilty of. When Asteroid M, the former orbiting base of Magneto breaks up and plummets to earth, the master of magnetism is disturbed by this turn of events and explains, "Asteroid M is full of all manner of dangerous and useful items that should not be allowed to fall into the wrong hands." Since the debris is in very large chunks, it is more than possible that devices could be salvaged from it. When one piece threatens to strike Ohio, The Avengers have to step in to avert disaster, thus making them aware of what is happening.

When Magneto chooses to journey to Southeast Asia where a particularly important piece of wreckage has fallen, he finds himself walking into a trap. The American government has tipped off the Soviet Union that Magneto may turn up there as they don't know where he has been hiding but would welcome anyone getting rid of him, due to his past rampages. The Soviets in particular have not forgotten that Magneto once humbled them by displaying what he could do when he destroyed a Soviet submarine in an awesome display of power.

Things become complicated when The Avengers learn of Magneto's whereabouts and decide that he should finally and truly stand trial since he eluded the World Court in **X-Men #200**. But the Soviets would prefer to mete out their own brand of justice in the form of the Soviet Super-Soldiers — Darkstar, Vanguard, Ursa Major, Titanium Man and the Crimson Dynamo.

The X-Men disobey Magneto and journey to southeast Asia to determine just what is going on. The distrustful Wolverine isn't entirely certain that Magneto doesn't want to retrieve the weapons for his own secret purposes. When they arrive, they find that instead of just finding out what's happening, they have to rescue Magneto from both The Avengers and the Soviet Super-Soldiers. Roger Stern, the regular scripter of **The Avengers**, has assembled a team consisting of Thor, Captain America, Captain Marvel, She-Hulk and the newest Avenger, Dr. Druid. Needless to say, The Avengers have their work cut out for them.

"Look at all this from The Avengers' point of view," says Stern. "The X-Men are harboring one of the most notorious known villains of the last quarter century. Magneto has subjugated nations, sabotaged government facilities and been involved in numerous crimes that are on the public record. He's even battled The Avengers on more than one occasion! The Avengers may have tempered their thinking on the matter. They may even believe that he has changed. But that doesn't excuse the actions of his past. During the course of the series The X-Men themselves will come to the realization that they too must question their relationship with — and allegiance to — Magneto."

Writing a story which involves the confrontations of three different super teams is no picnic.

"It's like walking a high wire while balancing a couple of boards and a lot of people. But it's exciting and I'm having a ball. I'm writing characters I've never written before. I have had some hands-on experience with the X-Men, but that was a long time ago when I was editing the book. There are some new members on the team since I was editor." Stern is playing on this idea of the X-Men being much different now through the character of Havok because Stern feels that he and that character both have something in common.

"When we were last with the X-Men, it was an entirely different team. Cyclops was the leader and Magneto was the enemy. Now Havok has to adjust to the newcomers and the changes, and so do I. He has problems relating to this new group of X-Men. They're a different group since my days on the book. Once they were considered a group of superheroes—almost a loose knit gang of Spider-Men who would show up, save the day, and disappear. Now they're feared and people are even more worried because they associate with Magneto, a known supervillain. It's an extra cross that they have to bear. Another funny thing is that this is the first time I'm getting to write Dazzler, and I named her way back when!"

Writing a book which has as many characters as this one, Stern can't help but have certain favorites.

"In the X-Men, I enjoyed writing Wolverine and Havok best. In the Super-Soldiers I really liked writing Titanium Man and, in a weird sort of way, Ursa Major. He's a big bear guy who reminds me of an old Arte Johnson routine. And in The Avengers, the two captains — Marvel and America — and She-Hulk are the most fun. I guess I also like The Avengers best as a whole. They are the most together bunch of heroes around. They know who they are and they're organized and full of purpose. The X-Men have an ambiguity about them. They're very confused, through no fault of their own. The world misunderstands them and though we can empathize with that, there's just something more powerful in The Avengers' confidence."

The way the world perceives mutants and the impact that is starting to have on The Avengers, to whom mutants have belonged from time to time, is an issue being dealt with.

"What's the difference between a hero who receives his powers from a radioactive spider and a hero who is born with a genetic ability?" Stern asks. "Does it make a difference? Should it make a difference? It's this irrational fear of mutants that the Avengers want to address. After all, it could escalate to include anyone who wears a costume or displays a super power. It's like hating left-handed people — it's the worst kind of paranoid bigotry."

In this, the time of the Mutant Massacre, in which even mutants have

COLOR DENSITY GUIDE

turned on mutants for their own selfish purposes, the world has become more dangerous than ever. X-Factor hunts down mutants and in turn are hunted and hounded. The Fallen Angels consider themselves outcasts and find that there are other mutants more than willing to take advantage of them and their youthful inexperience. Magneto, who has repudiated his past finds that you can't avoid something just by turning your back on it as powerful beings tend to have powerful enemies.

SONS OF X-FACTOR

Although it has not yet been scheduled, **X-Factor** writer Louise Simonson is planning a mini-series to be drawn by artist Jon Bagdanove. Bagdanove was most recently seen on the **Fantastic Four vs. The X-Men** mini-series. This series will deal with the kids that X-Factor has rescued—Rusty, Skids, Leech, Artie, Boom-Boom, Caliban and a new one named Rictor.

"They will decide that X-Factor can't do the job and they'll have to step in and do it for X-Factor," Louise explains. They may actually take over the name 'The Exterminators,' or they may not. The series is still definitely in the planning stages."

At this point plans are for the mini-series to appear by the end of summer. It will run four or six issues.

If there's anything one can count on, it's another mutant mini-series, and Louise also has plans for a second one, this time co-written with her husband, **X-Factor** artist Walt Simonson. That one will feature Wolverine and Havok.

"It'll be called **Meltdown**," Louise states, "and it will be an Epic mini-series painted by Jay Muth and Kent Williams. Kent won a silver medal at The Society of Illustrators show this year, and he's terrific. And Jay's **Dracula** graphic novel is out now and is getting a lot of critical acclaim.

"The plot of **Meltdown** is still fairly amorphous, but it will involve terrorists and a nuclear disaster — a story that we hope will be too spectacular for simple line reproduction. When you've got two such brilliant painters, it would be a shame not to exploit them." The premiere of **Meltdown** is also unscheduled at the moment and may not appear until sometime this fall.

It seems that the more complicated the lives of mutants become, the more mini-series they spawn.

SILVER AGE

BY GERARD JONES

BACK TO THE FUTURE

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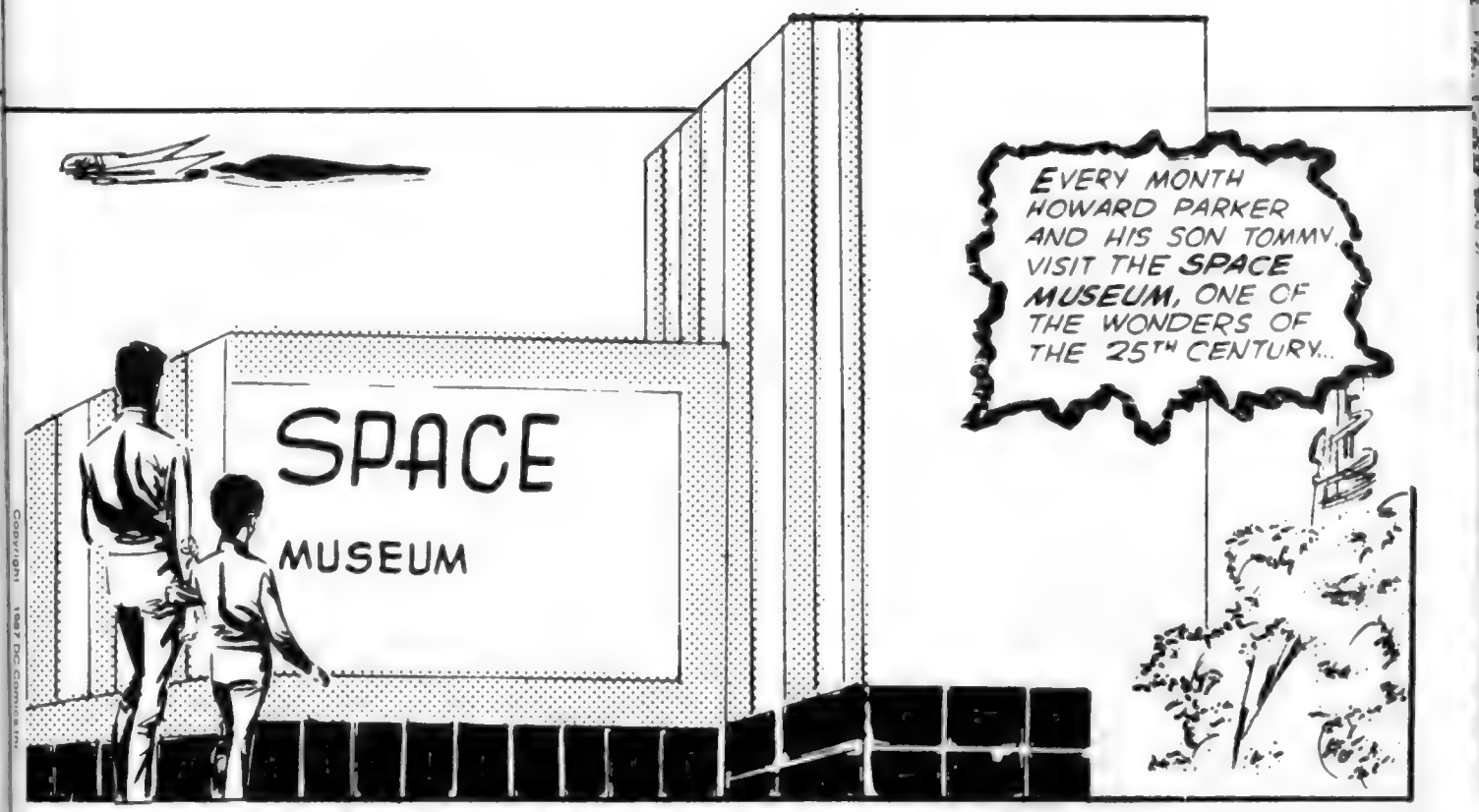
Space cabby plying the space lanes...

Once upon a time there was a future. It was a rosy place, a place of clear air and brilliant light, where pointed spires thrust to the sky and aerial pathways swirled around multicolored buildings. In this future men had reached the stars, conquered disease, built amazing devices to free themselves of the bondage of time and gravity. It was the finest place that the world had ever seen.

DC'S UTOPIA

This was the future that Superboy visited every time he broke through the time barrier to visit his friends in the Legion of Super Heroes. It was the future in which little Tommy Parker accompanied his father to the Space Museum to see relics of man's conquest of the universe. It was the future from which the super-scientific pseudo-magician named Abra Kadabra escaped in order to menace the Flash, in which Green Lantern lived a second life as guardian of the 58th Century, in which Tommy Tomorrow and Space Ranger kept the spaceways thrilling but secure. This was the future as portrayed in DC comics in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

In many ways, it was also the future that Americans hoped for, or dreamed of, in those same years. Faith in technology has never been greater than in those years. Modern appliances, medicines, power-sources, vehicles, materials and communication devices had transformed the world in the first half of the 20th Century; and as far as America was concerned, had transformed it almost completely for the better. Americans were living far longer, far healthier, far more securely, with far more possessions and liberties than they ever had before, mainly because of science and technology. And there was the glamorous side, too: the U.S. space program, just coming into its own in the early '60s, just pulling ahead of Russia's, was a symbol of our new power and aspirations. Mixing with the youthful optimism and energy of the Kennedy years, this faith in science led to a remarkable eagerness for the future.



THE WEISINGER CONNECTION

DC reflected that eagerness in images that would dazzle children. They were at their strongest in the comics edited by Mort Weisinger, the Superman line. Weisinger himself was an optimist, a self-made man of boundless energy; as a prolific magazine article writer, he was getting rich on America's information boom, and as a former science fiction agent and editor he had an innate fascination with the future. With the sleek, glorious art of Curt Swan and Kurt Schaffenberger, and the endless inventiveness of Jerry Siegel, Otto Binder and other writers, Weisinger created breathtakingly beautiful images of a dawning golden age that all us kids just couldn't wait to grow up into.

Weisinger's ultimate development of the future came in "The Legion of Super Heroes" guided by the writing of Edmond Hamilton. One of the great veterans of science fiction, Hamilton had epitomized the awestruck future-shock of 1920s America in his pulp series about the Interstellar Patrol, gone on to capture perfectly the gutsy optimism of the late 1930s and early 1940s in his Captain Future series, then distilled the apocalyptic visions of hte Post-War years into his classic novel, **The Star Kings**.

As the principal writer of the Legion from 1962 to 1966, Hamilton developed a confident, ordered, prosperous future world that fit the visions of the Kennedy years. His was a future of a single government on Earth, of united planets, science police, omniscient computers and, of course, the Legion itself: a self-policing band of pleasant, clean-cut, unfailingly moral and tremendously powerful youths who would keep the universe safe from evil...a sort of 30th Century Peace Corps. Added to the Hamilton future were the odd touches of artist John Forte; no matter how futuristic the setting, Forte would always toss in pastoral backgrounds, complete with rolling grassy hills, oak trees and even some quaint little houses. It was as if he was reasuring us that, no matter how much the world is changed by progress, we'll never lose the good things that we have now.

THE SCHWARTZ VERSION

That idea, that life will remain essentially the same except for more exciting settings and props, was strongest in the comics of Weisinger's friend and fellow editor, Julius Schwartz. Schwartz created several series for his science fiction comics, **Mystery In Space** and **Strange Adventures**, in which people of occupations typical of the mid-20th Century go about their business in a star-spanning future. The Space Cabbie and the salesman for Interplanetary Insurance, featured in series in the mid-1950s, were just regular working stiffs, going about their business like any New Yorker of the (then) present, but going about it on Jupiter, Venus and the asteroid belt, and having to contend with aliens and super-scientific crooks all the while. Later came Star Hawkins, a 21st Century private eye who, except for a robot secretary, gangs of raygun-firing hoods and other details, was cut straight from the mold of all '50s tv P.I.s; plus the Star Rovers, a trio of galaxy-travelling adventurers based on popular '50s

stereotypes, including a writer very reminiscent of Ernest Hemingway; and the Space Museum, a 20th Century-style educational institution regularly visited by a nuclear family that met all the Eisenhower-era standards of normalcy (except that both Mom and Dad were generals in a war to save the Earth from alien conquest).

Through all these stories, the faith in science is unquestioned, even proselytized. In Weisinger's world, the highly advanced planet Krypton was essentially ruled by a scientific elite. In Schwartz's, all the recurrent threats to Earth's safety and freedom were ultimately turned back by scientific know-how. That was the case even in the Schwartz series set in the present. Both the Flash and the Atom were scientists, and almost invariably utilized scientific principles to defeat their superfoes. And Adam Strange won nearly every one of his battles with weird menaces on the futuristic world of Rann by using some obscure scientific fact (thanks to the broad knowledge and astonishing cleverness of writer Gardner Fox).

Of course, there is a down side to science, as everyone was well aware in the days of the Berlin Wall confrontation and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Despite the optimism of those times, it was impossible to forget for long that nuclear destruction hung over all our heads. Julie Schwartz recognized that fact, but in his own peculiar way. He and writer John Broome created The Atomic Knights, a series telling of the adventures of a courageous band of survivors trying to restore order and prosperity to a post-holocaust world. It was a rare dose of grimness for DC in those years.

But the grimness didn't last. After the first couple of battles with food-horders and would-be tyrants, the world fell pretty much into place for the Knights. Very soon they had to turn their attention to fending off colorful threats like a reborn Atlantis and huge energy-beings. Life, it turned out, was pretty neat after the holocaust, what with giant dalmations to ride and super-fertile fruit to grow, and innumerable convenient ways to travel all over the United States (including New Orleans, where Dixieland jazz, a fascination of Schwartz and Broome, proved to have survived in great shape). And with Murphy Anderson drawing such beautiful backgrounds, how could you not want to live in that clean, open world? Maybe the holocaust was even a good thing, giving us a fresh, rugged start. It turned out, in any case, that it wasn't mankind's fault. World War III had been set off by a race of subterranean mole people, and so we were freed of the burden of guilt.

MARVEL'S DYSTOPIA

No other comic book company was as concerned wth the future as was DC in those years. The occasional story that was set in times to come, like Gold Key's Magnus Robot Fighter series, rarely revealed any real optimism or pessimism about man's destiny. But one little company did stray into speculation from time to time at the beginning of the 1960s, and when it did it was with a slant very different from DC's. Contrasted with the rosy future of Weisinger and Schwartz, the vision of Stan Lee and his collaborators at the nascent Marvel Comics Group was downright bleak.

Marvel's worldview was mainly colored by three individual outlooks: the apocalyptic visions of Jack Kirby (which had produced some very atypical future-stories for DC in **Challengers of the Unknown**); Steve Ditko's harsh, bitter view of human evil; and Stan Lee's social conscience, manifesting itself in his tendency to moralize through cautionary tales.

In one classic Lee/Ditko collaboration, a short story for **Strange Tales**, an insatiably greedy rich man devotes himself to travelling through time so that he can exploit the great riches of the future, only to find when he gets there that mankind has destroyed itself, leaving only a dessicated husk of a planet. Other stories along this same line carry a potent message: unless man shapes up quick, he has nothing to look forward to but misery and regret.

The Lee/Kirby team saw the future as a battleground for tyrants and powerful scientific wizards hungry for conquest. Particulary in the superhero comics, where villains like Kang the Conqueror and the Tomorrow Man raided our era, the future was seen as a world of menace and powers gone wild. Science was rarely benevolent in Lee/Kirby stories. Rather, it was a source of uncontrollable, corrupting might, a sword of Damocles over the head of modern man, threatening to destroy us all if it could break free of our restraints. Usually it had to be beaten, not by more or better science, but by simple valor and primitive brawn.

APOCALYPSE COMES TO DC

It is interesting to note that the Marvel superheroes, like those of Julius Schwartz's comics, were generally created by science. But where the transformation into heroism was a purely benevolent thing in Schwartz's world, it was always traumatic, frightening and ambivalent in Marvel's. Despite gaining great power, people were often made miserable, their lives destroyed, by a scientific transformation. Perhaps that's what Lee, Kirby and Ditko saw happening to all of us in this age of technological revolution.

The temper of the times favored Marvel's vision. The anguish and anger stirred up by social unrest and the civil rights movement made people question whether technology really had done us any good after all. The fears enflamed by the war in Vietnam, coupled with the horrors of napalm and other ultramodern weapons, drove home the destructive potential of our modern science. And the growing awareness of our environmental crisis cast scientists and industrialists as villains in the minds of many Americans. A rejection of the vision of a perfect future began that would dominate the thinking of young people in the late 1960s. Many in the counter culture withdrew completely from the technocratic world. Hardly anyone could see science as a savior anymore.

That may be, in part, why Marvel Comics became so fashionable in the late 1960s, why they took flight and soared above the competition. By the beginning of the 1970s, DC had no choice but to follow Marvel's lead. A tension had been building in the conflict between DC comics and the real world that had to come to a head. The center could not hold. When DC changed, it changed traumatically.

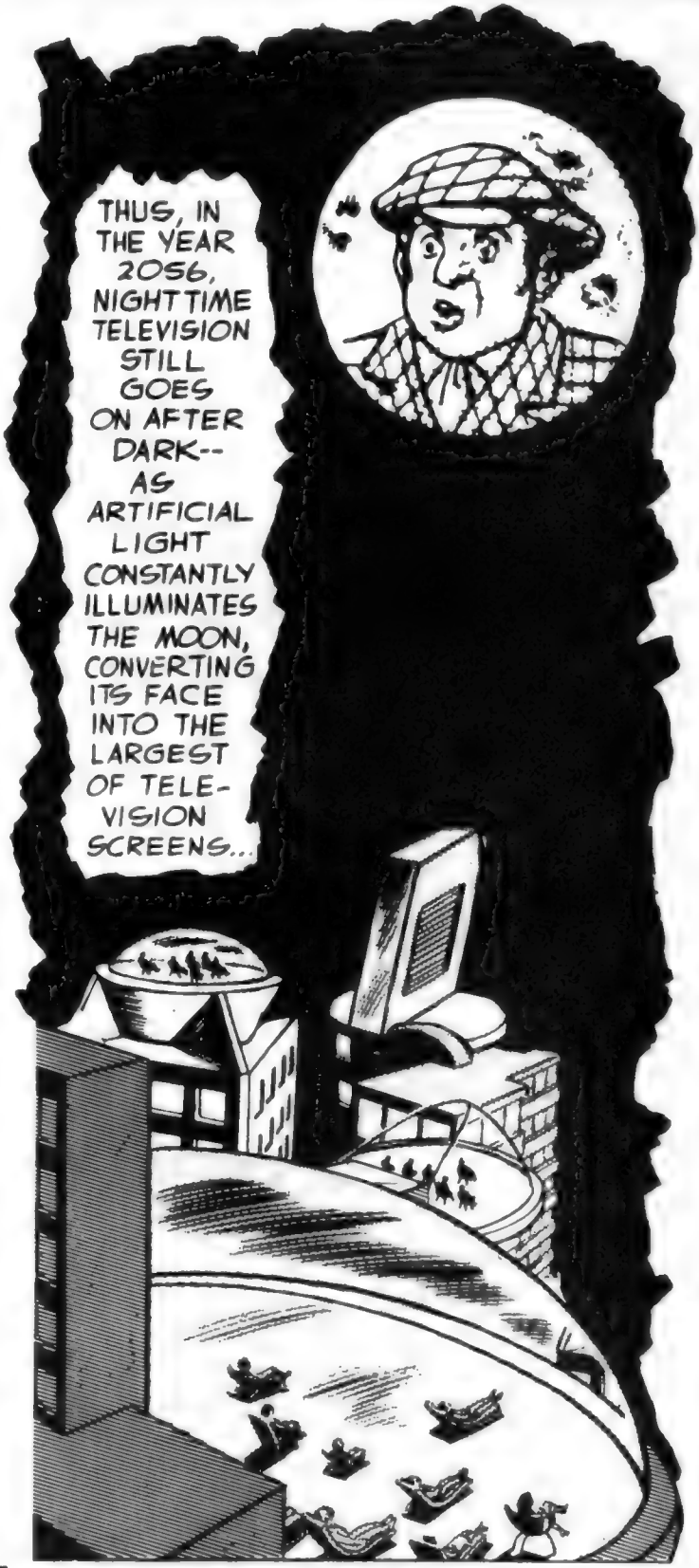
The best example of this is a story not strictly set in the future, but on a planet that is clearly intended to show what Earth's future might be. Under the guidance of writer Denny O'Neil and artist Neal Adams, Green Lantern and Green Arrow visit the planet Malthus, where the population boom has run wild, where every foot of space is filled by a human being and mankind is enslaved by the shortage of resources. What a far cry this 1971 story is from the DC superhero stories of just a few years — even one year — before. Green Lantern had been the ultimate wielder of scientifically-based power, an agent of super-advanced aliens who control a massive power battery. Green Arrow had been the cheerful master of miniaturized technology, with a gimmicky arrow for every occasion. Now Green Arrow was a radical, anti-technological, quasi-hippie. Green Lantern was a broken man, questioning everything that he had believed in. Together they gave us a horrific vision of our future.

The future was nothing but bleak in the 1970s. Series such as **Killraven** and **The Guardians of the Galaxy** promised us nothing but devastation and enslavement, maybe to be followed by a new start. Only **The Legion of Super Heroes** continued to show a fairly hopeful future, but in doing so it began to seem like just an affectionate tribute to the DC Comics of the 1960s.

By the 1980s, dystopia had become the rule. Many of the hottest, trendiest, most sophisticated comics on the market present a future without pleasure, beauty or hope. According to **American Flagg!** our world will be decimated by war, bled dry by ruthless capitalists, taken over by hypocrites and charlatans and then allowed to collapse into decadence. **Ronin** suggests that our cities will crumble into hellish wastelands and be taken over by insulated, uncontollable corporations. **Dark Knight** paints a world of crime and corruption so intense that a subterranean army of crazy, bloodthirsty street fighters will be our only hope These pictures of hopiessness are so accepted now that Scott McCloud, in order to place his **ZOT!** in a glowingly beautiful future-world, had to set it in a parallel of our 1965 universe.

In some ways, the darker visions of our future are more sophisticated and more powerful than the rose-tinted visions of DC in the 1960s. Nonetheless, I find it sad that America's young people — or comic book readers, at least — find so little cause for hope and seem so reconciled to the horrible times to come. I wish that someone, again, could conceive a vision of a world that we might want to work toward and look forward to. **CF**

Gerard Jones is the co-author of **The Beaver Papers** and **The Comic Heroes** as well as of numerous articles in National Lampoon and various other places.



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COMICS ON FILM

ERIC L. HOFFMAN

SUPERMAN

THE COLUMBIA SERIALS
PART TWO

The Columbia **Superman** serial was one of the biggest hits of 1948 (see my previous column for more on this). For Columbia, it was a double blessing; first of all, it was possibly the biggest moneymaker the studio had that year, 'prestige' pictures and all. Just about every major theater chain wanted to book the 15 episode adventure. And Columbia made the most of the situation, reportedly, in some cases, making it part of a block-booking package. That is, if the theater wanted to get at Superman, they would also have to book a certain numbr of other Columbia products (this sort of thing was a common practice at the time). It also gave the studio an additional bit of promotion in the selling of its future serial product; almost every serial that came from Columbia had reference to **Superman** in its ads ("...from the company that gave you SUPERMAN!").

National Comics had nothing to complain about either (they couldn't complain that much about the serial anyway since they had apparently been monitoring the production nearly every step of the way). Not since the classic Max Fleischer cartoons had the motion picture medium created a new wave of licensing for "Superman" merchandising. Watches, jackets, bubble gum, dolls...you name it, anything that Superman fans could dream of turned up. Columbia had a promotion idea for the theaters, a "Superman Club," with cards that would enable the moviegoer to see the final episode free if he had been attending the previous 14 weeks and his card was marked accordingly by theater personnel. In short, Columbia Pictures and National Comics had a bonanza on their hands.

KIRK ALYN—SUPERMAN

In spite of his not receiving billing in the cast listing of the first serial (although he was credited on the film's posters and stills), Kirk Alyn became firmly identified with the character of Superman. Although he would appear in other films and serials (such as Republic Pictures' **Federal Agents Vs. Underworld, Inc.** (1949) and the Columbia adaptation of popular comic book flyer **Blackhawk** (1952)) battling enemies of law and order or those who would destroy world peace in a more down-to-earth fashion, Kirk Alyn had become the victim of the curse (or blessing, depending on how it affects your career) of typecasting. "Pictures are funny," Kirk once observed, "You can play a particular type of role, become identified with it and keep on working in the business. But when you've played somebody like Superman, *the* ultimate hero, where do you go from there? I found that out soon enough when I'd get called in for a possible role and right away they'd recognize me from **Superman**. That would be the end of that. One of the casting people pointed out one aspect of the problem to me; I could be playing a heavy in a feature showing at a theater and there would be a chance of an episode of the Superman serial playing with it. So here would be Superman doing his super-heroics in the serial, and then turning up as a villain right afterwards. The whole effect of the film would be ruined, and, as a side-effect, probably upset a lot of youngsters who were Superman fans, too."

So it wasn't too surprising that with his film work cut down because of his link with Superman, Kirk wasn't too eager to put on the familiar tights and cape once more...especially at the old salary...when producer Sam Katzman contacted him two years later about a follow-up serial. "When I told Sam that I wanted more money to play Superman again, he had a fit, being as he was about money and budgets. But I had him. It was two years after the first serial and it was not only pretty fresh in fans' memories, but it was still making money. And Sam knew that it would be pretty difficult to bring in a new Man of Steel. And combined with the memory of how much money the first serial made, well, we came to terms and it was back to the super-heroics again!"

Writers George H. Plympton and Joseph, who had come up with the storyline for the first serial, were joined by David Matthews in the double-job of coming up with the storyline *and* the script for the second 15 episode Superman thriller that was released as **Atom Man Vs. Superman**.

Spencer G. Bennett was at the director's helm once more, with second unit work in the hands of veteran action/adventure film director Derwin Abrahams.

Kirk

Kirk Alyn as Superman in the serials...

The two faces of Lex Luthor...

Kirk Alyn stepped back into the dual role of Superman and "mild-mannered reporter" Clark Kent as if he had never been away. The same went for Noel Neill (back as Lois Lane), Tommy Bond (Jimmy Olsen) and Pierre Watkin (Perry White). But a new character was added to the roster of main players, adapted from the strip itself.

LEX LUTHOR LIVES

This was to be the screen debut for the film's villain, Luthor, Superman's arch-enemy, the scientific genius with a criminal streak in him a mile wide. Lyle Talbot, a familiar face in countless pictures and serials, proved to be an ideal choice for Luthor, bringing to life the character's ruthlessness and colossal ego. Anybody who has been fortunate enough to see his performance as Luthor in **Atom Man Vs. Superman** has agreed that his is still the best interpretation of Luthor to date.

The plot of the 15 episode Superman thriller got off to the flying start with a crime wave terrorizing Metropolis. The trademark of the crimes is the use of a scientific device to enable the criminals to escape the police. The man behind the scenes is Superman's arch-enemy Luthor, operating from a hideout deep within the mountains outside of Metropolis. Luthor has demanded that the city authorities of Metropolis turn over the entire contents in the vault of the Metropolis Trust Company. Then he will leave the city. If not, he will wipe the city off the face of the Earth. To prove his power, Luthor promises to destroy the newly opened county bridge.

Needless to say, Superman saves the bridge and captures Luthor and some of his immediate assistants, all within the first 10 minutes of the opening episode! Right then and there, you would think that some other villain would turn up to bedevil Superman and his friends. Well, it almost seems that way sometime after Luthor's capture and imprisonment. Several crooks, committing assorted crimes, disappear into thin air in front of witnesses, holding a silver coin in their hands. "Killer" Lawson, a dangerous criminal, about to be taken to prison, vanishes in similar mind-boggling fashion after telling authorities, "You'll never get rid of me, as long as I have my lucky coin."

Perry White, skeptical of the stories of the vanishing criminals, is forced to accept what happened. Clark Kent suspects that this is just the sort of thing that Luthor would come up with, but a check at the State Penitentiary reveals that Luthor is still in prison. In fact, he's in solitary confinement for his own protection. He's applied for parole, causing resentment among the other prisoners. In exchange for his parole, he has offered the government his latest invention, a combination of television and radar.

But even though Luthor is in prison, he is still in the center of criminal activities. The vanishing criminals were the result of another of his inventions, a device that can transmit matter over distance. All that is needed for the machine to transport a person is one of the special silver coins. Using the same method, Luthor leaves his cell and materializes in a cave outside Metropolis, where his chief aide, Alver, and two henchmen await. Luthor is checking on the progress of his latest invention, which he plans to use against Superman. It's called The Main Arc, a cabinet-like device that, once completed, will be able to transmit whole armies across continents...or eliminate even Superman by projecting him into space in another dimension. Luthor refers to such a fate as 'The Empty Doom.'

Episode One comes to an exciting conclusion with Lawson, the escaped criminal who vanished, robbing a jewelry store on the upper floor of a business building (Lawson at one time happened to be a stunt man specializing in "human fly" routines). Nearby is a television remote broadcasting truck, which, as Jimmy Olsen soon finds out, is an operating point for the gang. Captured when he spots Lawson (who has been materialized into the truck) turning over the robbery loot to Baer, another heavy, Jimmy is taken along by the crooks when they drive off with the police in hot pursuit. Clark manages to get away from Lois and Superman is soon flying in hot pursuit of the bogus tv truck. But after he deals with one heavy who tries to stop him, he rushes back towards the truck only to see it blow up with the heavies and Jimmy inside!

CHAPTER TWO

Of course, in the next chapter, the audience learns that the crooks and their captives were teleported out of the truck via the matter-transmitter device just before it exploded (so any bobby-soxers who were suffering anxiety pangs over Jimmy Olsen's fate could breath a sigh of relief).

As the serial goes on, Luthor is eventually granted that parole and seems to be going straight, opening up a television station, promising that "my genius will revolutionize the industry". Of course, it's all a front for Luthor's real activities. To keep his actions secret from the outside, he disguises himself in a bizarre metal helmet (lined with lead so that Superman can't use that old X-ray vision to find out who he is), black robes, gloves and a Bela Lugosi-like accent and calls himself Atom Man. By episode 7, Luthor has succeeded in creating synthetic kryptonite which his men use to capture Superman and bring him to the criminal scientist's cave. There, as Atom Man, Luthor sends Superman into the Empty Doom (which could be considered the equivalent, for that time, of the Phantom Zone), where for two episodes, Superman is trapped, returning to Metropolis as an invisible (transparent to the audience) form unable to do anything to stop the rampage of crime by Atom Man's gang.

Luthor's true activities are finally revealed thanks to sleuthing by Clark Kent, Lois and Jimmy. Luthor proceeds to pull out all the stops, reacting to the continued hunt for him by the authorities and Superman by first launching a missile at the Daily Planet building, then causing earthquakes, which keep the Man of Steel busy.

With Lois his captive, thanks to one of his special coins and the matter transmittor, Luthor decides to get away from pursuit...far away! He has also had a spaceship constructed and after the ship is launched, he transmits himself and Lois onto the craft (which he describes as an "airborne laboratory, equipped with all of my inventions."?) From it, he will literally hold the world for ransom. But Superman flies in pursuit, enters the ship and returns to Earth with Lois and Luthor under each arm, while the villain's ship and the others aboard are destroyed in a collission with a meteor.

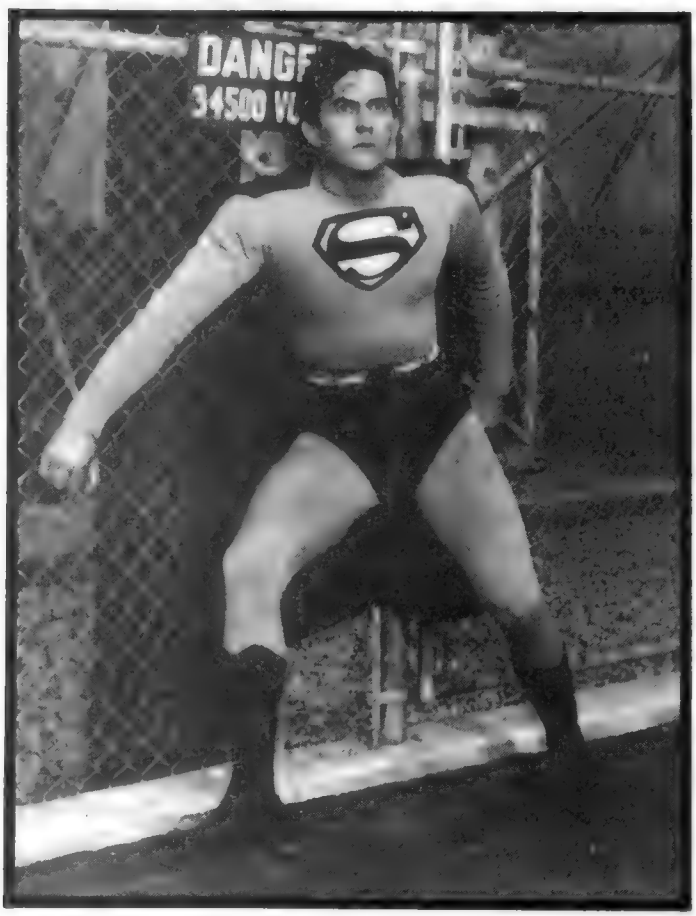
BEST SERIAL

Atom Man Vs. Superman is probably the better of the two Superman serials in that, unlike the first serial, it was not feeling new ground. It was pretty firmly rooted in the comic strip and gave the Man of Steel a foe worthy of his powers in Luthor. While Luthor may not have superpowers, his villainy and wealth of super-scientific devices kept the

Man of Steel more than just on his toes. In terms of a story line, the serial was also better, moving along in a smooth stream of events, unlike the 'episodic' line for the original adventure introducing the Man of Steel in a live format.

Once again, Kirk Alyn found himself working like mad once he donned the garbs of Superman and Clark Kent. In spite of a few moments where stuntman Paul Stader (who also played "Killer" Lawson) doubled for him, Kirk was once again doing most of his own stuff.

For most of the flying sequences, animation was used once more, but this time a little more work was put into the animated figure, adding shadows and even, in some cases, like the first serial, moments when Superman would be carrying people such as Lois Lane. But something else was added; close shots of Kirk in his Superman 'uniform' in flight...or at least the upper part of his body...courtesy of steel breast-plate and wires.



One particular scene had the intrepid trio of Clark Kent, Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen flying the Daily Planet plane in search of a possible lead to the whereabouts of Luthor and his men. In true villain fashion, agents of Luthor, posing as plane mechanics, had hooked up a bomb onto one of the wings of the plane, and our heroes soon found themselves in trouble as the bomb began to spark and smoke preparatory to exploding, and, obviously, destroying the plane and its passengers. Ducking into the rear compartment of the airship on the pretext of looking for some parachutes, Clark Kent changes to Superman, flies outside, plucks the bomb off the plane wing and hurls it into the ocean where it goes off (with stock footage of an atomic bomb blast edited in for the explosion!).

UNPLANNED HEROICS

For the effect of clouds passing by and smoke from the bomb, smoke pots were rigged up with a wind machine. Kirk was suspended on wires wearing the steel breastplate. Director Spencer Bennet had everything planned so the shot would go smoothly and in one take. But there was a problem. Kirk told it this way; "While we were shooting the scene, it turned out that the wind machine was too close to the smoke pot, and that smoke being blown towards me had small sparks in it. And wouldn't you know it, some of those sparks got right down between my chest and that steel breast plate. The next thing I knew, those cinders were starting to burn my chest. I kept slapping at my chest, but there was no way to get at the cinders, so I started yelling for them to get me down, fast! They did, and as soon as I was down, they poured a pitcher full of water down the front of my chest. Boy, did that feel good. Then it was back into a new jersey, and we shot the scene again...this time with a spark arrester on hand to make sure I didn't get scorched again!"

One of the other problems that Kirk had to deal with was the scenes where he had to carry the characters of Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen out of places, such as burning buildings, a barn filled wtih carbon monoxide (courtesy of the Atom Man's men) and even a laboratory filled with sparking equipment. "It was almost like the first Superman film all over again," Kirk recalled, "As soon as we started shooting Superman's heroics, Spence and some of the others would get into the spirit of the thing so much that I guess they unconsciously began to think that I *was* Superman! One of those kind of moments happened when Superman had to carry Lois and Jimmy out of either one of those super-scientific laboratories where all those gadgets were short-circuiting and a fire was going, or from a barn that the heavies had filled with carbon monoxide to kill the two reporters. Anyway, the way they escaped was Superman coming to the rescue, and carrying them out to safety. They'd planned to have a couple of dummies taking the place of the real actors. Well, we shot the scene, I'd rush in, pick up *both* of them and carry them out with one of them tucked under each arm. We had to shoot that scene about four times or so because of some technical problems, too much smoke or mist or a problem with the lights. Then about the fourth take, Spence Bennett came over and said, 'Kirk, that was good, but it looks like you're straining too much. I can see the veins standing out in your neck!'

"Well, I was breathing kind of hard by then for a good reason. We were supposed to have used the dummies for the shot, but nobody had brought them in. I'd been picking up and carrying Noel Neill and Tommy Bond during every take! Spence apologized like crazy and couldn't do enough to make me comfortable while I got my wind back...It was almost like the first Superman film and that business with the railroad truck. You fuss over an actor and he'll darn near kill himself for you!'

**All's well that end's well—
Luthor is foiled again!**

DIRECT FROM THE COMICS

Atom Man Vs. Superman was exciting superhero fun from start to finish. To get things off to the proper start, the serial's opening credits began with a shot of the cover of **Action Comics** and then Kirk leaping into the shot as if he had come from the cover of the book (this was taken from the opening of the first Superman serial) followed by a shot of the Atom Man character in his cave headquarters, with the serial's title superimposed over the shot. With the stage set, Katzman had the rest of the credits superimposed over one shot after another of atomic bomb explosions! One would have to say that every episode started off with a bang! (groan)

Following **Atom Man Vs. Superman**, Kirk Alyn did some film appearances, coping with the problem of being typecast as Superman. He would appear as one other comic-strip character in his film career, Blackhawk, before going into tv work and the stage. Noel Neill, of course, eventually continued as Lois Lane from the second season on in the tv series with George Reeves.

From time to time, over the last few years, there have been rumors of the two **Superman** serials being reissued or even turned loose on video tape. But so far nothing has come of this, possibly because DC is still doing quite well with the syndication of the George Reeves tv series, and the recent theatrical features starring Christopher Reeve as Superman.

But for those who had the good fortune to see the first live adventures of Superman, there will always be a special thrill recalling the first time that the Man of Steel leaped into action across theater screens in the person of Kirk Alyn, who is still, in my opinion, the original motion picture Man of Steel. I think the time is right for the two serials to be seen again. They may be dated in terms of the performance style, but **Superman** (1948) and **Atom Man Vs. Superman** (1950) are still good fun entertainment and a faithful adaptation of the most famous comic book superhero of them all, the Man of Steel, Superman! **CF**

BEFORE SILVER AGE

BY JAMES VAN HISE

If anything, EC's stories got more grotesque as time went by. **Tales From The Crypt #38** is a prime example of this as "Only Skin Deep!" drawn by Reed Crandall climaxes with a man pulling all the flesh off a woman's face — and we get to see the result! Even more disturbing is "Last Laugh" in the same issue. It presents a bizarre practical joke involving dressing up hunks of horse-meat in a child's clothes and throwing it on some railroad tracks (inspired by an actual childhood prank pulled by artist Bill Elder). This leads to the accidental deaths of three people — and the torture death of the practical jokester! Unlike a story about a vampire sleeping in the trunk of his cab, this story lingers because it seems too frighteningly possible!

Crypt #39 features the previously mentioned "Shadow Of Death." This story stands as one of EC's most effective, and even sensitive. When a crippled newsdealer finds his business and livelihood being threatened by a selfish competitor, the crippled man's shadow takes things in hand and murders his rival's shadow, with similar results in reality! The panels by Ingels of the shadow rising up from the crippled old man and lurching off on its strange mission of supernatural revenge make this a classic of comic book horror. Ingels gives the silhouette pathos and personality as it carries out its deed and the power the artist's pen brings to the story is a wonder to behold!

George Evans drew two stories linked by a common thread in **Tales From The Crypt #41 & 46**. Both stories involve inmates of homes for the disabled—one a mental institute, the other a home for the blind — being victimized by their keepers. But the themes are handled in a totally different fashion as one is horrific black humor while the other is a frightening tale of revenge. "Come Back, Little Linda!" in **Crypt #41** was always a favorite of those of us who collected and talked about EC back in the early Seventies. By this time in the series the horror stories had fallen into a predictable formula of revenge through irony. Twist endings were almost never a surprise. It was at this time that they had started bringing in new writers, which explains why the last year or so of the horror titles started plowing new ground and telling tales which were stylistically different from the familiar. "Come Back, Little Linda!" falls into the same sort of vein of black humor as "Country Clubbing!" in **Haunt of Fear #3** (Jan. '54) of a few months before. The story is intense—the abuse of mental patients is still a scandal 30 years later—and the ending is totally unexpected, but completely logical! Because of the nature of the story, we don't pay much attention to the ramblings of the inmates even though they are significant. The ending, in which an inmate who had been locked in a cellar dungeon is cuddling his only friend — a huge foul-smelling rat — is both repulsive and funny. The rat is even smiling!

"Blind Alleys" in **Crypt 46** is another powerful job by Evans. George Evans contributed a number of excellent

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HE HELD THE SOFT WET COVERING IN HIS HAND, STARING DOWN AT HER. HER BLOOD FLOODED OUT OVER THE PILLOW. HER RAW FLESH QUIVERED LIVERLY. HER EYES GLAZED. HER SICKLY GRINNING MOUTH... NOW STRIPPED OF ITS FLESH LIPS... CHOCKED OUT THE WORDS AS HIS STOMACH HEAVED...

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stories to all of the EC books, primarily the horror and war comics, although he did a couple science fiction stories as well, most notably "The Silent Towns" (**Weird Fantasy** 22). Evans style here is slick and very realistic, which can make horror stories very shocking. "Blind Alleys" was adapted into the EC horror movie **Tales From The Crypt** (1972).

The most unusual artist to work for EC was Bernie Krigstein. Although he moved into other forms of art over 20 years ago, it is apparent from his EC work that although comics appealed to him, he felt restricted by the form. His story "Master Race" in **Impact** #1 stands as a monument to his comic book technique. His horror stories seldom had much experimentation in them due to the EC method of supplying the artists with boards which already had captions and word balloons placed on them so that all the artist could do was draw the artwork in the panels. Krigstein's stories "Prairie Schooner" (**Crypt #40**) and "The Bath" (**Crypt #42**) are very good artistically but "Murder Dream" (**Crypt #45**) takes advantage of the dream sequences in it to play with perspective, create intense moods as well as portray multiple overlapping images to achieve an unsettling effect.

THE HAMMER FALLS

The late Forties and early Fifties were a time of great suspicion, and some would even say paranoia, in America. The post-war elation had been replaced by the cold war blues, especially when the Russians exploded their first atomic bomb. The colorful comic book heroics of the war years had largely been replaced by crime comics, which even in the late Forties were becoming the subject of concerned articles in various magazines. When Bill Ganes started **Crypt of Terror**, **Vault of Horror** and **Haunt of Fear**, their success caused dozens of imitators and the influx of 5 years of horror comics dominating the marketplace. Gaines didn't expect the trend to last and in fact believed that it would have played itself out within a couple of years anyway. But the trend got a push backwards which strangled it much sooner.

Juvenile delinquency was a hot issue of the day and the search for blame (since many parents didn't believe that they could be at fault) fell, among other places, on comic books. The famous book by Fredric Wertham, **Seduction Of**

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The Innocent (a title as salacious as anything it reported on, considering that it was a learned psychological study) focused attention on comics all the more. What is seldom mentioned when Wertham's book is pointed out as helping to bring about the Comics Code and the fall of EC's horror & SF comics, is that Wertham himself did not believe in censorship; merely in making people knowledgeable about his findings. His opinions about comics may have been strident, even refusing to recognize them as a legitimate form of literature, but he never called for their banning. That was done by those who used Wertham's books for their own ends.

The outcry against horror comics climaxed with Senate hearings on the subject, a matter which may seem remote and incredible thirty years later until one stops to consider that early in 1986 there was a Congressional hearing in Washington, D.C. on the matter of lyrics of Rock & Roll re records! There is also a conservative Christian movement afoot today that finds inherent threats in any fantasy literature that deals with magic or supernaturally powered characters, in any form. I've listened to radio broadcasts on this subject. Even E.T. has been branded as a Satanic, demonic image by some for reasons too bizarre and convoluted to go into here. Suffice it to say that repression of literature is by no means unique to the Fifties, but is happening even now, more through intimidation than by any (highly unlikely) threats of legislation. E.C.'s horror and weird science fiction comics were crushed by distributors finally refusing to display and sell them, not unlike the way certain chains are refusing to carry Rock & Roll magazines today. A detailed examination of the fall of the Fifties horror comics through the eyes of Bill Gaines can be found in Frank Jacobs book **The Mad World of William M. Gaines.**

Even in the midst of the chaos, Gaines was still planning to add a fourth horror title to his roster — **The Crypt of Terror.** But when wholesalers began turning against him, he threw in the towel and turned **Crypt #1** into the last issue of **Tales From The Crypt** instead. While the inside front cover of the issue announces the demise of the horror comics, the introduction to the first story still carries the Crypt Keeper's welcome to the new title, even to displaying a rendering of the issue's cover with the **Crypt of Terror** logo. When **Crypt #46** was reprinted by East Coast Comix in the early Seventies, it was finally published under the **Crypt of Terror** title, as had been originally intended by Gaines.

Gaines fought valiantly for his books at the time, even to publishing a cartoon editorial titled "Are You A Communist Dupe?" which made fun of those who were calling for the destruction of the horror comics. Gaines himself testified before the Senate hearings and admitted that the success of his titles brought about the horror trend of the Fifties. But the committee, and apparently America, wasn't ready to hear a publisher defend horror comics as being morally justifiable and in good taste. That E.C. tried to do something that was better than average was undeniable, but horror comics, whose readership was unarguably composed largely of children, couldn't help but have drawn attention to themselves. While children themselves may not have been adversely affected by them (if they were normal, anyway), parents tend to be far more squeamish than their children are. Today the Garbage Pail Kids cards (drawn by artists who are fans of the old EC's) amuse children while arousing nothing but the ire of adults, who find them sickening. But then that's half the reason the kids like them!

THE DEAD DON'T DIE

While E.C. is thirty years gone, all of the horror comics have been handsomely reprinted in hardcover volumes by Russ Cochran. This is thanks to the forsight of Bill Gaines who, unlike *any* other publisher back then, *saved* all of the original art from the comics while every other publisher carelessly discarded the pages from their magazines. This artwork is now slowly being sold at auction, with a share of the proceeds going to the original artists.

The enduring effect of **Tales From The Crypt** has been recounted by many writers and artists today, such as Stephen King did in his 1981 book **Danse Macabre**:

"As a kid, I cut my teeth on William M. Gaines's horror comics — **Weird Science**, **Tales From The Crypt**, **Vault of Horror** — plus all the Gaines imitators (but like a good Elvis record, the Gianes magazines were often imitated, never duplicated). These horror comics of the Fifties still sum up for me the epitome of horror, that emotion of fear that underlies terror, an emotion which is slightly less fine, because it is not entirely of the mind. Horror also invites a physical reaction by showing us something which is physically wrong..."

King goes on to compare the E.C. horror comics with earlier, more traditional tales of terror by stating, "the old man in 'The Monkey's Paw' is able to wish the dreadful apparition away before his frenzied wife can get the door open. In **Tales From the Crypt**, the Thing from Beyond the Grave is still there when the door is thrown wide — big as life and twice as ugly."

The ghost of E.C. continues to haunt horror comics, if not by comparing them to what E.C. did first, then by imitating them outright such as the first three years of **Creepy** and **Eerie** did in the early Sixties, even to using many of the same artists. The spirit of E.C. lingers, continuing to inspire new writers and artists who want to recapture the best of that time long gone.

CF

Art by Jack Davis who went on to become one of America's greatest illustrators.

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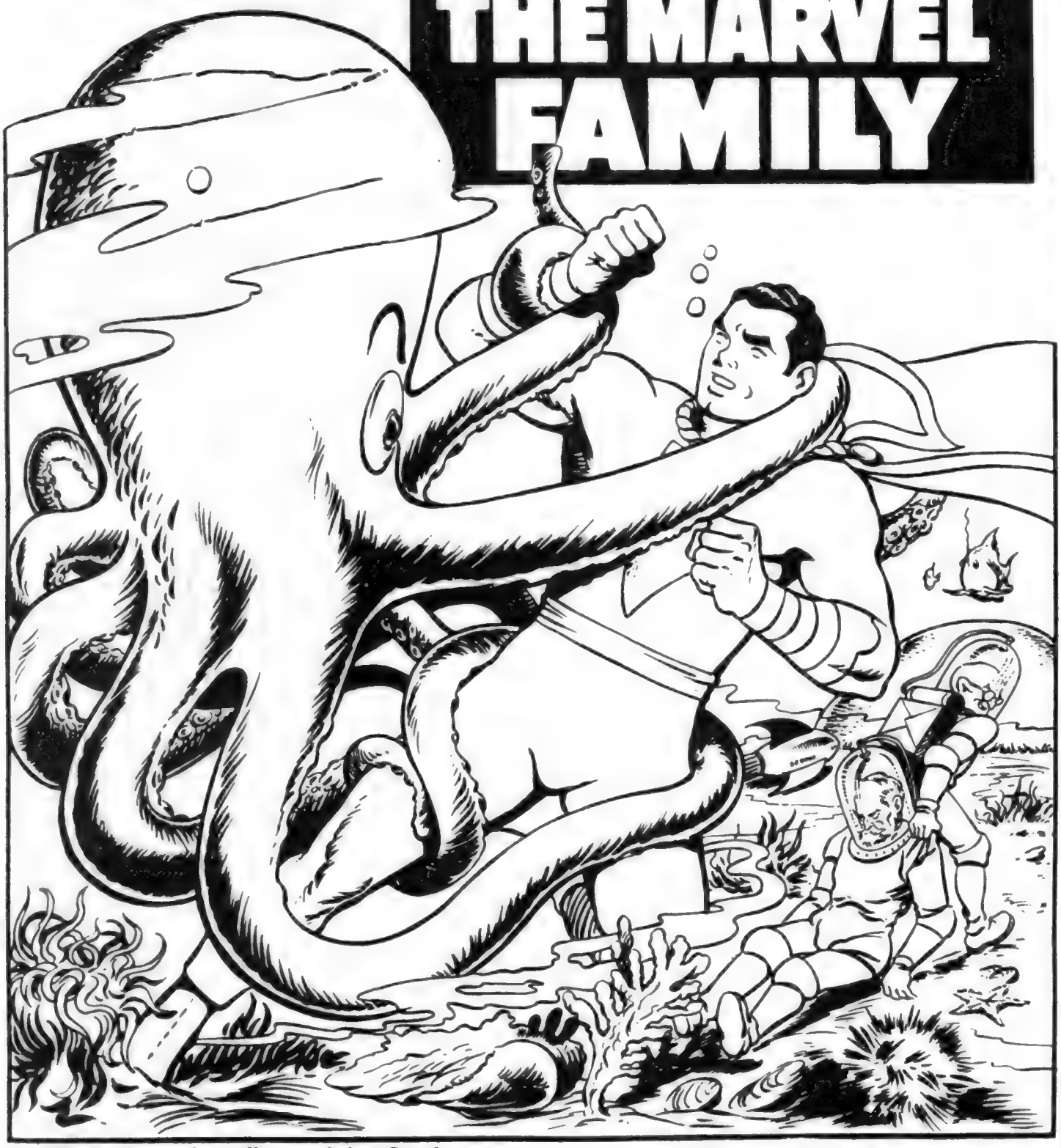
LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

BY ROY THOMAS

THE MARVEL FAMILY



The octopus is well armed, but Cap is stronger

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For the past several months I have been involved in writing the adventures of a new Captain Marvel, one that never existed during the Golden Age of comics. Because he co-exists with all of the other DC superheroes in the same universe, and because of the tastes of fans in the '80s, everything must be as realistic as it can be. Although the stories are obviously superhero fantasies, everything must have pseudo-scientific explanations.

OUR HERO HISTORY CONTINUES...

But not in a Golden Age Fawcett comic! The Binder-Crowley-Beck theory of the universe held that at its center was a gigantic peak called the Rock of Eternity (not to be confused with the Rock of Ages). From here it was possible to travel almost anywhere — including into the past or future — instantly. From his long "association" with the Marvels, Sivana had learned virtually all their secrets, so he naturally knew of this Rock. And furthermore, he possessed a rocketship capable of space-warping its way there in minutes.

However, Dr. Sivana had overlooked one little detail. Dwelling in a castle on the Rock of Eternity was Shazam himself; this was evidently where good little ancient wizards went when they died. Telescope in hand, Shazam spotted the Sivanas' rocket and immediately used his ethereal form to contact the Marvel Family. Cap Junior and Mary zoomed at once to the Rock, but arrived only in time to follow their respective worst enemies into various historical periods.

In the second chapter Georgia Sivana arrived in the Atlantis of 8000 B.C., whose language she instantly comprehended because "We Sivanas are a family of brilliant genuises." Finding the home of Chal-Patzum, the Atlantean scientist who had discovered Protium, she learned to her dismay that he had developed a machine he declared would save his supposedly doomed continent, which he claimed would soon sink because of an earth fault.

Gaining his confidence, however, Georgia discovered that he merely meant that his machine would make Atlantis rise again from the sea in the far future. For this purpose, he had sent his only son to another land with instructions to keep alive the memory of the sunken continent for 20,000 years.

When Chal-Patzun showed her various lead test-tubes filled with samples of the radio-active Protium, Georgia revealed her true nature and conked him from behind. However, as she was about to flee with the Protium, Mary Marvel swooshed in and knocked her unconscious. She awoke, bound, to see the World's Mightiest Girl conversing with the recovered scientist.

Then suddenly the ground began to shake; the earth fault in Atlantis was finally cracking. In a last-ditch attempt to speed up the changing of Protium to Neutrium. Mary said the magic word which brought a "KARASH!" of lightning. She changed into Mary Batson, but the Protium remained Protium.

To make things worse, an extra-strong rumble at this moment knocked her and Chal-Patzun off balance while freeing Georgia. The daughter of Sivana tied and gagged Mary and lugged her into her miniature rocket, leaving the Atlantean scientist to die for and with his country. She had her Protium.

In the third chapter Dr. Sivana himself shrewdly deduced that any descendant of Chal-Patzun would probably be a scientist, so it was no trouble (at least in a Fawcett comicbook) to locate his little home "out here in the suburbs" and kidnap him at gunpoint. His name; Charles Patterson, of course. However, the clever good scientist managed to scrawl the location of sunken Atlantis on the wall, and when Captain Marvel arrived he was soon hot on Sivana's trail. He succeeded in rescuing Patterson, but Sivana escaped.

Inside the water-proof dome which Chal-Patzun had built to protect his pet machine, Cap and Patterson found the original Protium changed to Neutrium. However, at this moment, Sivana returned to the attack in his rocketship, which doubled as a submarine. He had brought back a giant harnessed electric eel, whose shock — magnified by water pressure, it says here — changed Cap back into Billy Batson, who was half drowned at once. Sivana promptly shot Patterson in cold blood, took a vial of Neutrium, and fled with Billy in his rocket. And so the plot thickened.

In the future world of 12,000 A.D., it seems that the Atlantean tradition was still being carried on, and scientist Chass Passun had just used the Electrium still in his father's dome to raise the lost continent to the surface when Junior Sivana arrived.

In a scene perhaps a bit too reminiscent of the first two individual adventures, Captain Marvel Jr. arrived just in time to rescue the future Atlantean from the young Sivana's clutches, although the wicked Junior escaped by tossing seaweed into the other Junior's face. But when the World's Mightiest Boy introduced himself to Chass Passon and thereby changed automatically back into Freddy Freeman, Junior Sivana took advantage of the situation to strike from hiding and K.O. the crippled newsboy. Then he killed Chass Passon, took the Electrium and Freddy and rocketed back to the Twentieth Century. Surprised? Likewise.

In the fifth and final chapter (entitled "The Battle of the Age"), the three Sivanas reunited and congratulated each other in front of the bound and gagged teenagers. Dr. Sivana took the Protium, Neutrium and Electrium and tossed them (rather haphazardly, I thought) into his beloved machine. It was turned on and began to go WHIR-R-R and HMMMMM and other comic-booky noises.

"The world is ours — all ours!" Sivana chuckled.

Then, sharp blade in hand and world's wickedist gleam in eye, he approached Mary and Billy and Freddy, who were

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Capt. Marvel Jr. goes into action.

understandably terrifed and helpless. However, to their utter amazement, all he did was cut their bonds. Convinced that old Thaddeus had finally popped his cork once and for all, they immediately yelled out their words — but nothing happened!

Obligingly, Sivana explained. His machine had created a vast amount of free electrons, which had instantly formed a shell around the earth. These special electrons, he informed them, repelled lightning as like repels like, so that the famed Shazam lightning bounced harmlessly off. Understand?

"So now you see," he chortled in his glee, "why we went to all the trouble to get the Protium, Neutrium and Electrium. For as long as this machine operates, you kids can never again change to the Marvel Family! HEH! HEH!"

"H-Holy M-Moley!" exclaimed Billy.

Convinced that the final barrier was removed from his becoming the Rightful Ruler of the Universe, Sivana took the de-Marveled teenagers (as well as his own evil brood) to a palace he had built in the middle of nowhere. In it were huge thrones for "King Sivana," "Princess Georgia" and "Crown Prince Junior." And, being royalty, the Sivanas decided to indulge at once in the sport of kings, fox-hunting — with the kids as the foxes.

The ending of the story, unfortunately, was not quite up to the rest. Billy utilized the oldest of foxy tricks, walking backwards in one's own footprints to fool the hunter, and managed to double back to the unlocked rocketship. Since all intelligent teenagers can pilot evil scientists' private rockets, Billy flew Mary and Freddy back to the floating lab of the Sivanas, where they turned off the machine and Shazamed at once into the mighty Marvel Family.

OTHER SIVANA STORIES

There were five more clashes with Dr. Sivana and his brood. In issue #16, the Sivana Family, to stop the Marvels from winning a $25,000 "best family" prize, put an "Emotion Emulsion" into their water so that they would quarrel on the air. However, while battling their way across the countryside, they were accidentally rescued from the spell by the soothing harp-playing of none other than Miss Georgia Sivana herself.

In #23 the Sivana Family bought a newspaper and attempted unsuccessfully to use yellow journalism to ruin their foes. In #68 they conquered the entire universe by holding old Shazam as hostage in his Rock of Eternity castle; they attacked the Marvel Family with bolts of magic lightning before finally being defeated. In 1952, in issue #75, the Sivana tribe journeyed into the far future, the year *1960*, when space ships were zooming from planet to planet, to capture a Marvel-less universe. And in their final joint appearance (though Sivana starred many other times as a lone villain) they set a "Triple Trap of Terror" by land, sea and air that almost finished off the Cheeses.

OTHER FAMILIES

The "family" motif proved to be a very popular one in the comic, as a perusal of titles will show. In the 89 issues of **The Marvel Family** there appeared space-squatter families, netherworld families, future families, hermit families and the most interesting of all (excluding of course, the Sivanas), appeared in issue #20.

It seems that in the "hill country" a unique situation has occurred. One family, the Kruggses, had disposed completely of all its traditional feudin' rivals. The McCorns, the Batfields, the Nayleys — there just warnt none of 'em left.

Finally, in consternation, they turned to old Granny Kruggs. "Ain't there nobody nowhere fer us to feud with, Granny?" they implored earnestly.

"Wal," drawled Granny, "a long time back a feller named William Batson opined it was agonna be good weather, when gran'pappy said it was agonna rain. So nacherly he shot the Batson feller like a dawg, fer argying with him."

So the Kruggses started off after Billy Batson, whose picture they saw in a newspaper. It took more of a struggle than you might imagine for even the Marvels to eventually round them all up and slap them in jail.

Another predictably common theme, which we have already encountered, was the "trio" motif. Titles like "The Triple Trap of Terror,' "The Trio of Terror" and "The Triple Time Plot" are indicative of this formula. After Unc dropped out of the picture—and since none of the Lieutenants Marvel ever appeared after #2 — the World's Mightiest Family was especially suited to this type of format.

MORE VILLAINS

There were few recurring villains aside from the Sivanas. **King Kull**, the beastman enemy from **Captain Marvel Adventures** whose *raison d'etre* was to destroy all humankind, held forth in such epics as "The Democracy Smasher" (#67), "The Crust Cracker" (#73), "The Threat to the Junior U.N." (#77) and "The World Wrecker" (#86). The titles of these stories pretty well indicate their contents, but I always found King Kull an entertaining adversary for the Cheeses.

There were a few interesting one-shot villains: Zonga, leader of intelligent apes in #85, Mr. Power, who absorbed kinetic energy to become stronger each time the Marvels struck him, in #26, the Amoeba Men in #27, and Abigail Archibald, "The Earth Changer," who in issue #37 came up with the charming idea of rearranging the positions of all the Earth's continents in the interest of easing world travel.

BACK TO THE FAMILY

Contents-wise, **The Marvel Family** had a rather spotty history. First of all, it was impossible to guess how many pages it would contain from one issue to the next. Issues 1-4 contained 36 pages each due to the wartime paper shortage. With #5 it became a 52-page comic, and it hopped back and forth between these two sizes for several years before finally shrinking to the 36-page format that most comics have today.

Even more confusing to the regular reader was attempting to guess what these contents would be. **Marvel Family Comics #1** contained two stories of the combined Cheeses; and #2 had one family story and three individual adventures of Cap, Mary and Junior. This was at least a common format for some years, although #10 and a few other early issues contained several-part serials. And just to make matters more confusing, #11 boasted three Marvel Family stories, while #12 contained two MF tales and one in which Captain Marvel graciously aided Ulysses in regaining his lost kingdom of Ithaca.

Happily, the format established by the feature-length story in #10 seems to have caught on; it became increasingly common as the comic's life wore on. For example, issue #36 featured a "novel" in which the Marvels fought living meteors, " The Invaders from Infinity." In #48 they battled reincarnations of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. In #56 they embarked on "The World's Mightiest Project," creating a duplicate earth for inhabitants fleeing a dictatorship at the center of our planet.

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THE FAMILY GOES TO WAR

But, as the magazine neared the end of its long and checkered run, a subtle change crept over it, as well as over others in the Fawcett line. William Gaines' Entertaining Comics (or was it *Educational* Comics?) had set the industry on its ear with its "realistic" war and horror, and even Shazam's magic lightning couldn't stop the Marvel Family from being infected.

The Marvels began to take an active part in the Korean War, just as they and other early superheroes had fought superhumanly against the Japs and Nazis. Villains like the Red Vulture (#78), the Great Red Brain (#80) and the Mightiest Mongul (#81), began cropping up in **The Marvel Family**.

Even worse for their effect on the Cheeses were E.C.'s horror comics. Fawcett (like most other comic companies) never really got the hang of publishing readable horror stories, but it tried. And, to inject life into its apparently sagging sales, it even began to toss monsters into its remaining superhero magazines with depressingly increasing regularity.

There were the Hissing Horror in #74, the Mad Mummy in #79, the Space Ghoul in #80 and the Flying Skull in #83. Not all of these monsters took themselves too seriously, thank Shazam. But their mere presence seemed a detriment to the Marvel Family reputation.

And, as the last straw, there were even occasional combinations of the war and horror motifs — for example, in issue 382 where a story of 'The Beast Battallions' dealt with communist attempts to win the Korean War by sending giant serpents and other enlarged creatures against the United Nations forces.

Fawcett also began again to carry two or three Marvel Family tales per issue in a futile attempt to please every type of reader possible. In this regard, **Marvel Family** #80 seems especially symbolic. It contains three Family stories: "The Space Ghoul" for the science-fiction and horror fans, "The Great Red Brain" (also with s-f overtones) for all the little warmongers and, "The World Jumbler" with Sivana for the decreasing few who still enjoyed the type of story that had once put Captain Marvel on top of the superhero heap.

LAST DAYS

But it was no go. The super-doer comics were doomed, at least temporarily. And as if the sales picture alone weren't bad enough — for other comics as well as ones with costume heroes — Fawcett still had the lawsuit with National hanging over its bowed head.

As virtually everyone knows by now, D.C. had sued Captain Marvel as a "direct imitation" of Superman — a charge which I will leave it to the readers of this article to debate — while the first issue of **Whiz** was still warm. The case had been argued out of court for years, enriching no one but an army of lawyers. In 1953 it suddenly occurred to Fawcett that maybe it was time to give up, so they paid National an "unspecified sum" and have published few comic books but **Dennis the Menace** since.

The last published story of the Marvels, in issue #89, was fittingly though not purposely titled "And Then There Were None." On the cover a boy looked amazedly at blank white outlines of the Marvels and exclaimed, "Holy Moley! What Happened to the Marvel Family?"

What indeed?

But, although it becomes increasingly difficult to find a teenager who has the vaguest idea of who Captain Marvel was, the Cheeses have never really been completely forgotten. The serial is still around, ready to be resuscitated — and a very good one it was, too. And several years ago Charlton, the company which took over many non-super titles from Fawcett, used a number of old Marvel Bunny strips as secondary features in **Atomic Mouse Comics**. Charlton changed his magic word to "Alizam," his costume to blue (without the lightning-bolt insignia) and his name to Hoppy the *Magic* Bunny, and they were in business. And nobody sued, either.

In the '60s it was brought to my attention that a television guide carried a semi-direct copy of Captain Marvel (or perhaps of Junior) called Captain TV. The stories weren't much, but they did call forth some of the old nostalgia.

Of course, in the Seventies, DC tried another round of stories featuring the Big Red Cheese, some even by C.C. Beck himself. That didn't last and except for very occasional appearances in other people's books, the Marvels were not seen again. And now I am doing a new Marvel, but always with an eye to the original. **CF**

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